



United States Department of State  
*Bureau of Human Resources*

## **DEMYSTIFYING THE CIVIL SERVICE HIRING PROCESS**



Office of Civil Service Personnel Management

# DEMYSTIFYING THE CIVIL SERVICE HIRING PROCESS

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## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

One of the President's management reform initiatives is to build, sustain and effectively deploy a skilled, knowledgeable, diverse, and high-performing workforce that is aligned with mission objectives. The President's human capital goal is to have a workforce that will adapt quickly in size, composition, and competencies to accommodate changes in mission, technology, and labor markets. At the Department of State, we define this as:

***Dip •lo •mat •ic Read •i •ness*** n. (1) the ability to get the right people in the right place at the right time with the right skills to carry out the President's foreign policy priorities and objectives.

The **Civil Service (CS)** workforce is a vital component of the Department of State's diplomatic readiness initiative. While the Department of State's Foreign Service employees travel far and frequently, nearly 7,400 Civil Service (CS) employees serve as a stable resource pool in Washington, DC, at Passport Agencies and field offices throughout the United States, and at several Consulates in Mexico. Civil Service employees provide in-depth expertise and continuity in accomplishing all aspects of the Department's mission and are involved in virtually every function of the Department.

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### ***Purpose***

One of the keys to achieving our diplomatic readiness strategic goal is helping our executives, managers, supervisors, and other stakeholders achieve a better understanding of the Federal hiring process and the foundation on which our Civil Service human resource management system is built. With this goal in mind, we developed this tool to aid in, **Demystifying the Civil Service Hiring Process.**

### ***Using the Guide***

With the utilization of workforce planning, it is our hope that this tool will help customers fully utilize the staffing flexibility and hiring authorities currently available. The Guide is designed for both the neophyte and those more seasoned in the nuances of the Civil Service hiring process. The various components of the Guide can be used collectively or separately to gain a complete picture of the hiring processes or a snapshot of a particular process on the road to hiring.

### ***Roadmaps***

The Guide also contains several fact sheets called ***Roadmaps***, which provide a more in-depth explanation of the processes that impact hiring. The ***Roadmaps*** also enable us to share information; make our business processes more transparent; and identify some of the key factors human resource staff consider as they formulate decisions and apply Civil Service laws, rules, regulations, and policies to everyday issues.

### ***Feedback***

Your feedback on the Guide is welcomed and will help us to determine the value of tools such as this. Comments and/or suggestions may be forwarded by e-mail to: [cspweb@state.gov](mailto:cspweb@state.gov).

## FOUNDATION & AUTHORITY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (HRM)

Civil Service employees are governed by hiring laws, rules, and procedures that are different from those applied to the Foreign Service. However, our hiring goals and challenges are similar and the fundamental precepts that guide us are the same -- the **Merit System Principles**. The nine Principles, in the *Roadmap at Appendix A*, ensure that applicants and employees receive fair and equal treatment in the hiring process regardless of the Federal law or rule used to hire, assign, or promote an employee or candidate for employment.

People must be hired on the basis of their qualifications, and retained and advanced on the basis of job performance and their ability to take on more responsible work. No other considerations may apply – not political party, race, color, sex, religion, national origin, marital status, age, handicap, or other factors unrelated to the job such as sexual orientation. These and other core values such as avoiding the **Prohibited Personnel Practices**, listed in the *Roadmap at Appendix B*, must continue to serve as the foundation for what we do.

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### ***Authority for What We Do***

There are *three human resource systems* within the Department. Members of the Foreign Service (FS) are governed by the Foreign Service Act of 1980, as amended, as are our Foreign Service National (FSN) employees. Unless specifically “excepted” by law, the authorities that govern most of the Department’s Civil Service employees are in **Title 5 of the United States Code (5 U.S.C.)** and the **Code of Federal Regulations (5 CFR)**.

### ***Title 5 United States Code (5 U.S.C.)***

The **United States Code (U.S.C.)** contains the laws of a general and permanent nature enacted by a particular session of Congress. Title 5 of the United States Code (5 U.S.C.) covers Government Organizations and Employees. Federal hiring is subject to the laws set out in Title 5 unless a law specifically exempts a Federal agency.

Currently there is ongoing debate regarding the numerous laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures that impact Civil Service hiring. Until reforms occur, our human resources professionals are committed to offering managers and supervisors creative solutions, within the current framework of Title 5 U.S.C.



***Code of Federal  
Regulations  
(5 CFR)***

The **Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)** is the general and permanent rules published in the *Federal Register* by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal government. The CFR is divided into 50 titles covering broad areas subject to Federal regulation. Title 5 of the CFR covers Administrative Personnel. Thus, when hiring, Federal agencies **must** also meet the regulatory requirements established by the Office of Personnel Management set out in 5 CFR.

***OPM -- Human  
Capital Advisor***

The **Office of Personnel Management (OPM)** serves as the President's agent and strategic advisor for human capital. OPM's key responsibility is to ensure that the Federal government's human resource management systems (HRM) support agencies in recruiting, hiring and retaining a merit-based, high-quality, and diverse workforce necessary to meet the needs of the American people. OPM operates and seeks continuous improvements to Federal HRM systems; administers Government-wide programs; and works in partnership with agencies to create tools that will help them achieve human capital objectives. The President and Congress entrust OPM with developing and implementing regulatory guidance, which in turn helps ensure Government-wide accountability and adherence to the Merit System Principles.

***Classification Act  
and Position  
Classification  
Standards***

Before hiring can commence, there must be a valid position description for the job. Many feel that the current classification system established by the **Classification Act of 1949**, as amended, is outdated. However, until the necessary reforms take place, we must work creatively within the framework of the 1949 Act and the **OPM Classification Standards**.

The Classification Act and the Merit System Principles establish the standard of providing *equal pay for substantially equal work*. The Act also defines the requirements of the various General Schedule (GS) grades and the Senior Executive Service (SES) and is the basis for the grade level determination of positions in the Executive departments and other agencies of the Federal government. In similar fashion, the **Coordinated Federal Wage System**, established in 1968, provides the framework for uniform policies, systems and practices for prevailing rate; i.e., wage grade employees.

***OPM  
Qualification  
Standards***

On the road to hiring, selecting officials must determine the specific qualifications needed to do the job prior to announcing the position. OPM establishes the educational, licensing, medical and test requirements for occupations covered by Title 5, and the general and specialized experience requirements for certain occupations. In making qualification determinations, Federal agencies are guided by the **OPM Qualification Standards Handbook**.



For the most part, when filling positions covered by Title 5, the Merit System Principles and the following rules guide Civil Service hiring:

***Merit Promotion  
and Internal  
Placement  
Procedures***

*The Department's Merit Promotion and Placement Program* at **3 FAM 2310** guides us when hiring within State and from other Federal agencies; i.e. **Status** candidates. (See ***Roadmap, Hiring via the Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Procedures*** at **Appendix C**); and

***OPM Competitive  
Examining  
Procedures***

*The OPM Competitive Examining Process* guides us when hiring U.S. Citizens from outside of the Federal workforce to fill civil service positions. It also enables Federal employees (e.g., temporary) who do not have competitive status to compete for a "permanent" appointment. Additionally, lower graded Federal employees – with higher level qualifying experience – may bypass the one-year time-in-grade restriction by applying for higher graded positions through the competitive examining process. (See ***Roadmap, Hiring via the OPM Competitive Examining Process*** at **Appendix D**).





## DELIVERY OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM) SERVICES

Understanding how human resource management services are delivered in the Department of State is another key stop on the road to meeting our **diplomatic readiness** goals. Just as the President and Congress entrust OPM with certain human resource management responsibilities, the Secretary of State holds the Under Secretary for Management (M) and the Director General of the Foreign Service and the Director of Human Resources (DGHR) and their teams accountable. Together, they ensure that the Department's HRM activities are carried out effectively and in accordance with applicable laws, rules, regulations and Department policies and procedures.

At State, human resource services are delivered in both a *centralized* and *decentralized* environment. What does this mean? Simply, certain bureaus and offices have the authority to take and approve human resource actions from classification to discipline and others do not.

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### ***Centralized HRM Services***

The majority of the Department's bureaus are responsible for handling human resource issues and services on a localized and limited basis. Under this scenario, for example, the Office of Civil Service Personnel Management (HR/CSP) retains **centralized** program authority and operational responsibility for classification and staffing.

### ***Decentralized HRM Services***

At his/her discretion, M may delegate to bureaus the authority to perform these and other HRM functions. Bureaus with delegated authority provide the full scope of work and services for positions up to a certain grade level, currently the grade 13. For higher graded positions, including those in the Senior Executive Service, the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) retains central program and operational authority and responsibility.

### ***Exceptions***

In still other instances, a bureau or office may have delegated HRM authority, but is **excepted** by Congress from Title 5 rules altogether. Such is the case with the United States Mission to the United Nations (USUN). Congress also provides agency Inspectors General with the authority to conduct their human resource programs, but they must do so in accordance with Title 5 requirements. State's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) operates under this authority.

### ***One Team, One Mission***

Regardless of whether HRM services are centralized or decentralized, M, DGHR and HR operate in partnership with each bureau or office. We are: "One team, One mission." When positions in the organization are covered by Title 5 -- we must all follow the same rules. State's human resource staffs serve as a vital link to a wealth of consultative services and are a critical stop on the road to hiring.



## WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT

Over the next several years approximately 30% of our Federal workforce is eligible to retire. The Department of State is in a similar situation. Additionally, 60% of the Department's Senior Executive Service (SES) members are currently eligible to retire. Thus, the Department cannot afford to wait until the baby boomers exit before making plans to fill current and future vacancies. The labor market is becoming increasingly more competitive. Today's workforce is less interested in remaining with a single-employer for an entire career. Salary incentives alone are insufficient to attract, motivate, and retain employees. In this environment, workforce planning will be another key stop on the road to meeting our **diplomatic readiness** goals.

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### ***What is Workforce Management?***

**Workforce Management** is a systematic approach for managing an organization's workforce needs. Key components of workforce planning include analyzing current and future workforce needs; assessing the competencies, skills, training and developmental needs of the current workforce; determining current and future skills and resources needed; and developing strategies to address these needs, (e.g., skills assessments, training/re-training, targeted recruitment, management and leadership development). Having the ability to forecast workforce needs is half the battle in competing in the war for talent.

### **The Department has several tools to aid in your planning:**

#### ***Domestic Staffing Model (DSM)***

The **Domestic Staffing Model (DSM)** will serve as a tool to accurately define current resource needs as well as link the Department's request for domestic human resources through sound workload measurement indicators. The Bureau of Human Resources is completing the development of the DSM as a companion to the Department's Overseas Staffing Model (OSM). Together, the models will provide our leadership with the necessary analytical tools to make more informed decisions about the size and structure of the core workforce needed to conduct our foreign affairs mission.

#### ***Civil Service Workforce Planning System (CSWPS)***

The **Civil Service Workforce Planning System (CSWPS)** will provide the Department with a set of planning tools that will enhance its ability to shape the Civil Service workforce. Adapted by the Bureau of Human Resources from systems developed for the Department of Army, the CSWPS contains two components: An *analysis component* will be used to search for patterns within current and historical data to provide a clearer understanding of the



dynamics of the workforce. A *forecasting component* will then use this information to produce multi-year workforce projections. The CSWPS will work in tandem with the existing Foreign Service Workforce Planning Model (FSWPM) to provide comprehensive projections for State's American career workforce.

### ***HR Bureau Knowledge Center***

The **HR Knowledge Center** is a self-service automated reporting tool, which allows authorized users in Bureaus/Offices to access position and certain personnel data. Using the Knowledge Center reporting tool, a Bureau Executive Office has the ability to generate and print standardized reports on a Bureau-wide and/or organizational basis.

**Examples:** A snapshot of occupations and grades in which attrition occurred may provide some idea of the positions with the greatest turnover. A list of employees currently eligible to retire and/or eligible to retire within 3 to 5 years by occupational series and grade can offer some hint of where attrition is likely to occur. A report by position title, series and grade level can assist in determining whether the organization is top heavy and, thus, ripe for hiring entry level talent -- while bureaus/offices still have baby boomers on board who can mentor and train.

### ***Position Description (PD) Library***

The HR/CSP **Position Description (PD) Library** is a valuable tool and can assist hiring officials. Using generic PD's in the library facilitates classification consistency, saves time in writing PD's, and thereby expedites the processing of staffing and recruitment actions. Close coordination by the selecting official with the appropriate bureau Executive Office and HRM staff is essential to the development and final classification of PD's.

### ***Identifying Competencies***

The training continua that follow are available on the Foreign Service Institute's (FSI) Intranet website. The continua can assist you in identifying the competencies needed for successful job performance in specific occupations and for future leaders:

- **Training Continuum for Civil Service Employees** – A roadmap to training and professional development; and
- **Leadership Management Training Continuum** – One stop shopping for identifying leadership and management skills.



## CIVIL SERVICE HIRING PROCESS

Now that you have a workforce plan in hand, what are the best ways to hire talent? There are several offices that can lead you in the right direction. **Appendix E, Civil Service Hiring, How Can HR Help** lists these offices and the services they offer.

As we guide you down the road of Federal hiring, keep in mind that most people who first enter the Civil Service -- whether they join the Department of State or another Federal agency -- do so by following the same basic path. The guiding principle on this journey is competition.

### ***Snapshot of Hiring Processes***

A **Snapshot of the Civil Service Hiring Processes** at **Appendix F** shows the typical steps that the Department must consider when filling Civil Service jobs in the competitive service. The hiring rules and processes used depend on whether positions are in the “excepted” versus the “competitive” service.

### ***Competitive Service Hiring***

To secure an initial Civil Service appointment in the competitive service, most candidates must compete with the general public for the job. This is accomplished in one of two ways: (1) through an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) process called **competitive examining**; or alternatively, candidates who have **non-competitive, or competitive eligibility (status)** may compete under the Department of State’s internal **Merit Promotion** procedures, described in the *Roadmap* at **Appendix C**.

### ***Exceptions to Competition***

While competition is very much the norm in Federal hiring, certain individuals with **non-competitive** eligibility are allowed to bypass this process and may enter the competitive Civil Service without having to compete with the general public. There are, however, some caveats that you must be aware of that are explained in the *Roadmap* on **Hiring a Non-competitive Eligible** at **Appendix G**.

#### **Examples of Non-competitive Eligibles:**

- Certain former overseas family members;
- Peace Corps volunteers and staff;
- Employees who complete an internship under the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP); and
- Certain Veterans



## ***Excepted Service Hiring***

By definition (5 U.S.C.) **excepted** service positions are outside the **competitive** and **senior executive** service. Excepted service positions have been “excepted” from the requirements of the competitive service by law, Executive Order, or OPM regulation (5 U.S.C. 2103 and 5 CFR part 213). When recruiting for these positions, (e.g., law clerks, attorneys, students, USUN positions and political appointees) competitive service rules and procedures do not apply. Due consideration, however, must be afforded to preference eligible veterans who apply for positions in the excepted service.

Employees in excepted service positions **do not** acquire competitive status unless specifically permitted by law, Executive order or OPM regulation, (e.g., Presidential Management Interns (PMI)). Bureaus/Offices who have excepted service positions can work in partnership with HR/CSP and/or the Office of Recruitment (HR/REE) when filling these positions.

## ***Timeliness in Hiring***

Hiring does not have to be a lengthy process. Some positions can be filled in as little as two weeks. Is this really true? Yes, the process itself can be fairly simple and does not have to be slow and time consuming. Knowing the rules, honest and open communication between the hiring officials and the human resource professionals, and upfront planning are key. The human resource staff *must* be at the table when key decisions on hiring are made.

**Examples:** State has a big advantage when it comes to Civil Service hiring. Spouses for example of certain former overseas employees meeting the non-competitive executive order eligibility requirements who are **currently** on the rolls of the Department in a pay or non-pay status can be hired for any permanent or temporary position for which they qualify. See the *Roadmap, Hiring a Non-competitive Eligible* at **Appendix G**. Persons with disabilities and certain Veterans who meet eligibility requirements may also be hired quickly.



## DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT TOOLS

### IDENTIFYING KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES, AND COMPETENCIES

The hiring process begins well before a vacancy is advertised. Regardless of the competitive process used, an up-to-date **position description** is needed, a **job analysis** must be conducted; any **selective factor(s)** must be identified; and a crediting or rating plan (manual or automated) must be developed to determine the *best-qualified* candidates for the job. Up front planning is key to a successful hire.

#### *Up front Planning is Key*

The time devoted to reviewing and/or updating the position description and developing a quality job analysis and crediting/rating plan will be time well spent. These tools help to determine the best-qualified candidates and can also be used to develop questions for structured interviews.

Insufficient time devoted to these processes results in wasted effort – selecting officials are not pleased with the candidates and want the job re-announced; applicants complain about the process being unfair; and everyone complains about the length of time it takes to fill the position. Managers and supervisors must work in partnership with their bureau Executive Office in developing the position description, job analysis and assessment tool for their positions. There is no need to wait until a vacancy occurs since these documents can always be reviewed and updated once created. Planning ahead is key.

#### *Position Description*

A **position description** (PD) is the official description of management's assignment of major duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships to a position. An accurate position description reduces the risk of hiring an individual without the right knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies and is the roadmap to a successful hire. Periodically, supervisors should review their organization's position descriptions and re-write them, if required, to prevent any differences between the actual work assignments and the position description.

In designating the position sensitivity (e.g., non-sensitive, critical sensitive) for Department positions, bureau Executive Offices should utilize 3 FAM 2222, Guidelines for Position Sensitivity Determination.





### ***What is a Job Analysis?***

A **job analysis** is a systematic, documented review of the job to determine what knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs), and competencies the worker must bring to the job to perform at a successful level. At State, we currently use two **assessment methodologies**: (1) a manual or written tool called a rating or crediting plan; and (2) an automated tool, developed by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) called USA Staffing.

### ***What are Selective Factors?***

Selective placement factors are knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies or special qualifications that are in addition to the “minimum” qualification requirements for the job. When certain expertise, skills or competencies are critical for successful job performance and cannot be learned on the job within a reasonable period of time (usually 90 days), selecting officials may consider including a **selective placement factor** on the announcement. These factors are deemed so essential, (e.g., the need for a bilingual employee) that candidates who do not clearly demonstrate that they possess them are automatically screened out. **The selective factor cannot be so rigid that only someone working for the Department of State is able to meet the requirement.**

### ***Determining Qualifications***

On the road to hiring, selecting officials must determine the specific qualifications needed to do the job prior to announcing the position. The job analysis, position description and the **OPM Qualification Standards Handbook** facilitates this process.

Keep in mind that OPM establishes the educational, licensing, medical and test requirements for all Title 5 occupations as well as the general or specialized experience requirements for certain occupations.

### ***General & Specialized Experience***

Where OPM provides agencies with the flexibility to define the **general** and **specialized** experience requirements for a job, the human resources specialist calls upon the selecting official for guidance. How this experience is defined will ultimately help in determining whether candidates qualify for the job.

Generally, after reaching the grade 5 level, **one year** of “specialized” experience -- equivalent to the next lower grade -- and time-in-grade is needed to advance to the next higher grade.

### ***Education***

Frequently education may be substituted for general and/or specialized experience requirements and this information is automatically included in the job announcement. Combinations of successfully completed post-high school education and experience may also be used to meet total qualification requirements for certain



grade levels. When developing the benchmarks for the crediting/rating plan, in addition to experience, education may also be included in the descriptions for each level. *See the chart at **Appendix H** for a sample of the **Education Substitutions for Administrative and Management Positions**.*

***Written Rating  
or Crediting Plan  
(Manual  
Assessment)***

When using the manual assessment process, a written rating or crediting plan must be developed to describe the benchmarks for each of the levels at which candidates' experience, performance and/or education and training will be evaluated, (e.g. barely acceptable, acceptable, or superior). Each level is worth a specific number of points. Specific examples of how a candidate might demonstrate a particular knowledge, skill, ability or competency through work and/or volunteer experience, education, and training are described in the benchmarks for each level.

***USA Staffing  
(Automated  
Assessment Tool)***

When using the **USA Staffing tool**, an automated questionnaire is developed in consultation with the selecting official or a subject matter expert. This questionnaire serves as the rating instrument. The questionnaire is based on the position description and job analysis process. Benchmarks or task statements and selective factors are incorporated into the questionnaire. Questions may be weighted based on the requirements for the job. Using the specific questionnaire developed for the job, candidates record their answers. Scores are then automatically tallied based on the weights assigned to each question.





## RECRUITMENT SOURCES

Hiring/Selecting officials in consultation with the human resources staff must decide the best source or **area of consideration** from which to recruit. The area of consideration is listed on the job announcement and is the source from which candidates will be considered.

### *Factors to Consider*

- Likelihood of attracting a reasonable number of highly qualified and diverse candidates;
- Urgency of filling the position in question;
- Whether the need is permanent or temporary;
- Success of recent efforts to recruit candidates for similar positions;
- Whether the position is one in which there is under-representation (e.g., race or gender);
- Recent turnover in similar positions;
- Labor market factors that may affect the ability to recruit qualified candidates, now or in the future, for similar positions (may include such factors as salary ranges among comparable positions, scarcity of skills, emerging technology, hazardous conditions, and/or shift work);
- Grade levels, experience and competencies of current workforce; and
- Special or unique qualifications needed for the position.

### *Targeted Recruitment*

Hiring Officials must also determine when to conduct targeted recruiting -- for diversity as well as talent purposes -- how far to cast the net, and the vehicles to be used for recruitment.

#### **Examples:**

- Coordinating recruitment trips with the Office of Recruitment;
- Publicizing vacancies through Diplomats-in-Residence
- Advertising in newspapers and other print media;
- Utilizing Internet companies such as <http://www.monster.com>;
- Utilizing radio and television ads.

*A checklist of **Recruitment Tips** may be found at **Appendix I**.*



## *Areas of Consideration*

The four areas of consideration from which the Department most frequently recruits are in the shaded boxes below.

**1. Eligible Department of State (DOS) Employees Only:** When there is an adequate pool of highly qualified candidates **within** the Department, the area of consideration may be limited to *Eligible Department of State Employees Only*.

### Categories Included in this Area of Consideration

- ✓ **Competitive Status (Status) Candidates.** Employees on the rolls of the Department of State with competitive status; i.e. current and former career and career-conditional employees who have served at least 90 days after a competitive appointment, may apply for the job. (This includes Department employees working in a temporary capacity with reinstatement or non-competitive eligibility.)
- ✓ **Non-Competitive Eligibles.** Under this area of consideration any non-competitive eligible on the rolls of the Department, in a pay or non-duty status, may also apply for the job. A selecting official may also select an employee with non-competitive eligibility outside of the vacancy announcement process when the individual meets all eligibility and qualification requirements for the job.
- ✓ **CTAP Candidates.** Department employees who may be separated, for example because of a reduction-in-force (RIF) receive special selection priority for Department jobs under our **Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP)**. To receive this priority consideration the employee must:
  - Apply for a job at or below the grade level of his/her current position and the job cannot have greater promotion potential than the job from which the employee is to be separated; and
  - Be determined well qualified for the position.



When a selecting official opts to go **outside** of the Department, he/she has several sources from which to recruit which are described in greater detail below:

**2. Status, Non-competitive, Reinstatement, CTAP, ICTAP Candidates, & Eligible Veterans:** When assessing candidates in this area of consideration, the Department's Merit Promotion and Internal Placement procedures apply.

**Categories Included in this Area of Consideration**

- ✓ **Competitive Status (Status) candidates.** Current and former career Federal employees and career-conditional employees who have served at least 90 days after a competitive appointment may apply for a job opened to "status" candidates.
- ✓ **Non-competitive Eligibles.** In addition to the non-competitive eligibles described under item 1 above, this area of consideration includes candidates who are not on the Department rolls who have acquired non-competitive eligibility due to a specific appointing authority, as previously discussed;
- ✓ **Reinstatement candidates.** In certain circumstances, former Federal employees are allowed to reenter the Federal competitive service workforce without competing with the general public. The candidate may be reinstated without regard to a vacancy announcement at or below the grade level he/she held on a "permanent" basis prior to separating from the Federal service. The position to which the individual is reinstated **cannot**, however, have greater promotion potential than the position, which the individual previously held on a "permanent" basis. When the position has greater promotion potential, competition is required and the candidate is rated and ranked along with all other qualified candidates.



- ✓ Candidates eligible for special selection priority under the **Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP).** *See further explanation under area of consideration in #1 above and #4 below.*
- ✓ **Eligible Veterans.** When an agency accepts applications from outside its own workforce, the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) of 1998, as amended allows eligible veterans to compete under the merit promotion process. Eligible veterans must be a preference eligible veteran or a veteran who has been separated under honorable conditions from the armed forces with 3 or more years of continuous active duty service. Veterans who meet minimum qualification requirements for the job are rated and ranked, along with other qualified candidates who apply. Unlike the OPM competitive examining process described below, no additional points are added to the score of veterans.

**3. All Sources:** If a selecting official decides to cast the net further, the **OPM Competitive Examining** process is used to hire U.S. Citizens who are “outside” as well as “within” the Federal government, hence the term “all sources” area of consideration.

All sources announcements afford an opportunity for U.S. Citizens in the private and public sectors as well as Federal employees who do not have civil service status to compete for employment opportunities in the competitive service. It also enables lower graded Federal employees who have higher level qualifying experience to compete for promotion opportunities by bypassing the one-year time-in-grade requirement. Individuals, however, must meet all OPM qualification requirements (e.g., education and/or specialized experience equivalent to the next lower grade level of the advertised job).



**4. ICTAP Eligibles Only:** Prior to making a selection from **outside** of the Department's workforce, we **must** give displaced Federal employees who are eligible for special section priority under the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP) an opportunity to apply for the job. An ICTAP candidate who applies for the job and is determined to be "well-qualified;" i.e., ranked at the satisfactory or above level, **must** be selected over a candidate without special selection priority.

**Example:** While the ICTAP category is automatically included on job announcements opened to candidates outside the Department, it is also utilized as a separate area of consideration. For example, when a highly qualified candidate with non-competitive eligibility who **is not** currently on the Department's rolls is identified for the job, at a minimum, OPM regulations require us to announce the position for a short period of time to ICTAP candidates only. Under this scenario, when no ICTAP candidate applies or is deemed "well qualified," the non-competitive eligible may be placed in the position.



## ANNOUNCEMENT OF JOB

Once the supervisor, in consultation with his/her human resource specialist, determines the qualifications for the job and the area(s) of consideration that will be utilized in filling the job, the next turn on the road to hiring (in most cases) is to announce the job. For most jobs, this is where the competitive process begins.

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### ***Open Period of Announcement***

Job announcements at State are usually open from **five to ten** workdays. The minimum open period for announcement is 5 working days. Some jobs may dictate a longer open period due to unique skills needed, difficulty in filling the position and/or the number of positions to be filled. In some cases, there may be a need to coordinate the opening and closing date of the announcement to coincide with paid advertising, a recruitment trip, career or interview fair.

### ***Pre-employment Interview, Travel and Relocation Costs***

Prior to announcing the job, Bureau's Assistant Secretary or designee must weigh the benefits of paying travel and relocation costs and/or pre-employment interview expenses to attract candidates. A decision to pay such expenses must be documented in the announcement. Bureaus may pay these expenses where it is in the interest of the government and not primarily for the convenience of an individual. For specific details, refer to 3 FAM 3190, <http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/03fam/03fam3190.doc>.

### ***Announcing a Job***

When recruiting from outside of the Department, we must post announcements on the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) website at [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov). All Department of State vacancies are also posted on the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) Intranet and on the HR Internet website, [www.careers.state.gov](http://www.careers.state.gov), which links to the OPM usajobs website.

### ***Submission of Applications***

Interested candidates submit their resumes to the office identified on the job announcement by one of the methods stated in the announcement: mail, fax, or e-mail. When applicable, candidates may apply on-line using the automated USA Staffing process discussed above. Supporting documentation such as college transcripts, rating factor responses (otherwise known as supplemental qualifications statements) and performance appraisals (where required) must also be received by the date specified in the announcement.

### ***Closing Date***

Generally, applications and all related material must be received by the announcement's closing date. If applications are being accepted by mail, they must be received **within 5 working days** of the announcement closing date.



## ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL OF CANDIDATES

Once the announcement closes the Department of State's assigned human resource specialist or the Office of Personnel Management, when we have contracted for OPM services, directs their attention towards the assessment process. The Department utilizes the following tools to assess applications and determine which candidates are eligible, meet the minimum qualification requirements, and are the "best" qualified candidates to be referred to the selecting official.

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### ***Manual Qualifications Analysis***

When using the "**manual**" assessment process discussed earlier, a human resources specialist conducts the **qualifications analysis**. Based on the qualifications criteria previously established for the job, each application package is thoroughly reviewed to determine whether the candidate meets eligibility and the minimum qualification requirements for the job. Factors considered are whether the candidate is eligible for priority consideration, within the area of consideration, meets any time-in-grade, and minimum qualification requirements for the job, including selective placement factors.

### ***Manual Rating and Ranking***

Under the "manual" assessment process, a rating panel, usually comprised of two subject matter experts (SME) reviews the applications of all candidates who qualify to assess the extent to which the candidates possess the KSAs and competencies identified in the job announcement. The Panel evaluates each candidate's application and assigns points based on the pre-determined benchmarks in the previously developed crediting/rating plan.

### ***Automated Rating and Ranking***

The **USA Staffing** tool automates both the qualification and rating processes. When candidates apply through the **automated** process, the USA Staffing tool automatically assesses the candidates' qualifications based on their responses to each of the pre-weighted questions on the questionnaire developed for the job.

The Tool also automatically flags the records of applicants requiring adjudication of Veterans preference or special selection priority under CTAP and/or ICTAP. In addition, the responsible human resource specialist ensures there are no discrepancies by closely comparing the candidates' answers on the questionnaire to their applications.



***Referral of “Merit  
Promotion”  
Candidates***

Based on the points assigned by the rating panel or, if applicable, USA Staffing Tool, candidates applying through the *Merit Promotion* process are rated and rank ordered by score. The highest ranked candidates are then referred in *alphabetical* order on a *Certificate of Eligibles* for each grade level for which they qualify. Additionally, a non-competitive eligible is not rated or ranked. When qualified, the candidate(s) are referred on a separate Non-competitive Certificate of Eligibles. *Veteran’s Preference does not apply when using Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Procedures.*

***Referral of “All  
Sources”  
Candidates***

In referring candidates under the *OPM Competitive Examining Process*, candidates are referred on a Certificate of Eligibles for each grade level for which they qualify in “score” order. Currently, candidates who are preference eligible have five or ten extra points added to their score.

***Category Ratings***

In 2002, Congress enacted the Homeland Security Act. The Act authorizes Federal agencies to use alternative ranking and selection procedures. Candidates can be referred to the selecting official using a process called **Category Ratings**. Instead of a numerical rating being assigned, applicants can be placed in a group based on “quality” of experience. Veterans will be placed at the top of the category for consideration within each quality group. **We are awaiting guidance from OPM on Category Ratings; thus the Department has not yet implemented this rating system.**





## INTERVIEWS AND SELECTIONS

Information provided on Certificates of Eligibles, and in the application package, is to be treated as privileged information and should be discussed or made available only to those who have a need to know. Selection or non-selection of the candidates referred must be in compliance with OPM regulations and Department policies and procedures.

### ***Importance of Interview***

Upon receiving a **Certificate of Eligibles** selecting officials must conduct a *thorough* review of all candidates' application material. A structured interview should be conducted to ensure that the best individual is selected for the job. While interviews are not required, they are strongly recommended. Interviews add an additional dimension to the selection process and are a way to assess candidates' oral and interpersonal skills, and whether they can think on their feet.

### ***Where to Start***

The same job analysis used to determine the best-qualified candidates can also aid in developing questions for the structured interview. The purpose of the interview must be clear. The questions must be tailored and asked of each candidate to elicit job-related information only, and to assess the extent to which candidates possess the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities and competencies to perform the duties of the position. No employment commitment should be made at the time of the interview. In conducting interviews, the *Roadmap, Conducting a Structured Interview* at *Appendix J* may be helpful.

### ***Interview One, Interview All***

Consistency is important to ensure fair and equitable treatment. If one candidate from a **merit promotion** certificate of eligibles is interviewed, **all** other candidates referred on that certificate **must** be interviewed. This rule does not apply to Competitive Examining certificates, as discussed below.

### ***Pre-employment Interview Expenses***

When it is in the interest of the Federal government, a Bureau may pay expenses for pre-employment interviews. Interview expenses are bureau funded, **not** centrally funded. In deciding whether to interview an out of state candidate via phone or in person, consideration must be given to the criteria set forth in 3 FAM 3190 at <http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/03fam/03fam3190.doc>.



### ***Rule of Three***

When interviewing candidates referred under the *OPM Competitive Examining Process*, the *rule of three* applies. Currently, only the top three available candidates may be considered for the job. Unless there are multiple positions to fill or someone in the group of three withdraws or is removed from consideration for a valid reason, it may not be prudent to interview more than the top three candidates on the Certificate. (*See Roadmap on OPM Competitive Examining at Appendix D.*)

### ***Veterans***

In the OPM *competitive examining* process, veterans **must** be selected before a lower ranked non-veteran. Selecting officials may not pass over a veteran to select a candidate who is not a veteran, unless a written objection (documentation of the reasons why the candidate should not be hired) is submitted to and sustained by the Director of HR/CSP or the designated OPM official

### ***Reference Checks***

Reference checks are an integral part of the selection process and should be completed on **all** candidates under serious consideration for the job. Employers, former supervisors and colleagues can provide information on the candidate's qualifications, character, and general fitness for employment, work habits, and dependability. The information obtained completes the profile of the candidate and is critical to hiring the best person for the job.

### ***Annotating and Return of Certificate***

Action taken by selecting officials on a Certificate of Eligibles **must** be reported by noting the appropriate action symbol beside the name of each individual (e.g., D = declined; W = withdrew; NS = non-selection; S = selection).

The selecting official must sign, date and return the completed certificate and all application material and attachments to the appropriate staff member. To ensure conformance to OPM and Department procedures, the assigned human resource specialist will audit the certificate and application material to ensure there are no procedural errors or violations of merit system principles.

### ***Expiration of Certificates***

Selection officials are generally given 45 days for *Merit Promotion* and 60 days for OPM *competitive examining* certificates, to make their selections. In extenuating situations, a selecting official may request an extension of the Certificate through his/her Executive Office. Otherwise, a Certificate of Eligibles that is not returned by the prescribed date will be cancelled.



## TENTATIVE AND FINAL OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT

Once the selecting official makes a selection, he/she must work with his/her bureau Executive Office in getting the employee on board. Prior to extending a *tentative offer* of employment and the *final confirmation* thereof, the selecting official must consider several issues, which are discussed below.

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### ***Security Clearances***

Every appointment to a “sensitive” position; i.e. secret or above within the Department of State is subject to a security clearance by the Bureau of Diplomatic Security; except that, to the extent authorized by the Office of Personnel Management, a lesser investigation may suffice for per diem, intermittent, temporary, or seasonal employees, or aliens employed outside the United States or with the Foreign Service Institute (12 FAM 231.4).

### ***Temporary Provisional Appointments***

If a security clearance is required, an option the selecting official may want to consider is whether a ***temporary provisional appointment*** is appropriate.

In making this determination, the selecting official must determine whether (1) there is a sufficient amount of appropriate and **unclassified** work that can be performed *temporarily* without a security clearance; and (2) the work can be performed in an area where classified information is **not** stored, processed or discussed.

When the two requirements above can be met, the Executive Office can then determine the candidate’s interest in accepting a *temporary provisional appointment*. The provisional employee and supervisor must sign a statement of understanding of the conditions of employment including the fact that the candidate’s employment **will not** continue should a security clearance be denied. Once the candidate is granted a security clearance he/she is converted to the permanent appointment.

### ***Superior Qualifications***

Selecting officials, in consultation with their Executive Office should also determine whether there is a need to set the new appointee’s salary above the step one of the grade. In considering this option, several factors must be considered such as whether the agency has a special need for the candidate’s services or he/she is uniquely qualified for the job in comparison with other candidates; and is forfeiting income. Superior Qualifications Appointments must be approved by the Director of HR/CSP prior to the effective date of the



appointment and the candidate entering on duty. (See *Roadmap, Superior Qualifications Appointments* at *Appendix K* and 3 FAM 2280.)

***Recruitment  
Bonus***

Consideration should also be given to whether there is a need to seek approval for a **recruitment bonus** for an individual in lieu of or in addition to setting the individual's salary above the minimum rate of the grade. For guidance see 3 FAM 3180, Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses and Retention Allowances.

***Travel and  
Relocation Costs***

Should there be a decision to pay travel and relocation costs, the prospective employee must sign a continued service agreement, DS Form 5052. The agreement should be forwarded along with the tentative offer and must be signed before the employee enters on duty and commences travel. By signing this agreement, the individual agrees to remain in the service of the U. S. Government for 12 months following the date he/she reports for duty.

For "new" employees these costs are borne by the Bureau and are not as comprehensive as those expenses paid to a current Federal employee who is transferring. New appointees include both individuals newly appointed to the Federal government and individuals appointed after a break in service. For a Civil Service employee transferring from another U.S. Government agency to the Department when there is no break in service, travel and relocation expenses are paid out of "central" funds in accordance with the guidance at 3 FAM 3190, Pre-employment Interview and Relocation Expenses for New Appointees, <http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/03fam/03fam3190.doc>.

***Tentative Offer  
of Employment***

Once the selecting official considers the options and issues discussed above, he/she should coordinate with the bureau Executive Office to make a tentative offer of employment to the selectee. The bureau Executive Office then takes the appropriate actions to make the tentative job offer, initiate the security clearance, seek approval for superior qualifications appointment, a recruitment bonus and/or travel/relocation expenses, if applicable.

***Final Offer of  
Employment***

Once the appropriate actions on the selectee's appointment have been completed, the bureau with delegated HRM authority or the Office of Civil Service Personnel Management's Staffing Division (HR/CSP/S) takes the appropriate action to finalize the job offer and bring the employee on board. This involves preparing a letter to the selectee to confirm the appointment and processing the personnel action to appoint the selectee. If the selectee is currently employed with



another Federal agency, finalizing the job offer may include obtaining preliminary employment information and a release date from the appointee's human resource office.



## PERFORMANCE PLANNING, CAREER DEVELOPMENT & MENTORING

*The appointment is confirmed, what's next?*

By planning, monitoring, developing, appraising, and rewarding employees, supervisors and managers can be assured that employees have a *clear* understanding of their performance requirements, and gain and maintain the appropriate knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies necessary for promotion and job retention. Supervisors must discuss goals of the organization, performance expectations, career objectives, interests, and training needs with their employees. Once again, up front planning is key. The following are some of the key steps on the road to ensuring that the new hire starts off in the right direction.

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### ***Position Description***

Upon the employee's arrival, supervisors or rating officials should provide employees with a written description of regular work assignments in the form of an official position description (PD). The PD is not intended to be a complete listing of every task the employee will be called upon to do. However, any continuing differences between the work assignments and the position description must be reconciled by rewriting the PD.

### ***Performance Planning***

It is important for the employee to have a clear understanding of the performance requirements of his or her job. This includes understanding the specific duties for which he/she will be responsible as well as the critical elements of the job, the standards for successful performance and the goals and objectives of the organization.

### ***Generic Performance Standards***

The Generic Performance Standards (GPS), Form DS-1966A, are the basis for determining levels of performance for each job element. The GPS identify specific criteria that describe the various levels of performance: Outstanding, Excellent, Fully Successful, and Unacceptable. Rating officials must use the GPS as their guide in assessing employees' performance unless the Executive Resources and Performance Management Division of HR/CSP has approved specific performance standards or other criteria.



## ***Job Elements***

Job elements are major work assignments and responsibilities assigned to employees that are directed toward a specific goal or objective. The job elements are derived from duties contained in the position description. A **critical** job element is a work assignment or responsibility so vital that unacceptable performance on the element will result in a determination that an employee's overall performance is unacceptable. At least one job element must be designated as critical. A **non-critical** element measures individual, group and/or team or organizational performance. A non-critical job element, while essential, cannot be used to take a performance-based action or to lower an employee's rating to unacceptable.

## ***Job Elements and Performance Standards = Performance Plan***

Within 30 days of the employee's arrival, the supervisor must discuss the employee's written critical elements and performance standards and establish a performance plan using DS Form 1966, *Employee Performance Plan, Progress Review, and Appraisal Report*.

## ***Progress Review***

At least one progress review of the employee's performance must be conducted during the annual rating cycle, which begins in January and ends in December. The review is documented on *Form DS-1966*. To assist the supervisor in conducting a Progress Review, *DS-Form 1967* may be used.

## ***Probationary Period***

The first year of service for an employee selected from a competitive examining certificate or appointed by a special authority is considered to be the probationary period. (Under an equivalent type of an appointment in the excepted service, this is usually called the "trial" period.) During the probationary period, the supervisor must determine whether the employee is performing satisfactorily. If not, the employee may be dismissed and he/she normally does not have appeal rights. Civil Service employees serving on an initial appointment to a supervisory or managerial position are also required to serve a probationary period, which is, generally, a year. (See 5 CFR part 315, Subpart H and I for further information.)

## ***Unacceptable Performance***

Employees performing at an unacceptable level in one or more critical element(s) are notified of the critical element(s) for which performance is unacceptable and afforded an opportunity period to improve. Notification of unacceptable performance can occur at any time during the appraisal cycle, including the end of the performance appraisal period. At the conclusion of the opportunity





period, if the employee's performance continues to be unacceptable, action may be initiated to reduce in grade or remove the employee from the job in accordance with 3 FAM 4550 and 5 U.S.C. 4303.

### ***Individual Development Plan (IDP)***

Once an employee settles into the job, one of the first assignments for the supervisor along with the employee is to develop an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to map out short and long-term developmental strategies. The IDP not only helps employees perform in their current position, but also assists them in preparing for the next step along their career path.

### ***Mentoring***

It is also a good idea to identify a volunteer to serve as the employee's mentor. The mentor serves as teacher, coach, counselor, challenger, and guide. The counsel and advice of an experienced colleague can help employees handle various situations, enhance their development and avoid some of the pitfalls that can derail a career or delay a promotion. The Department's formal Civil Service Mentoring Program provides employees an opportunity to work one-on-one with more senior employees to learn more about the Department and their career opportunities. Although this Program may not be open when your employee comes on board, the Program coordinator in HR/CSP can direct you. A wealth of material is available to guide you:  
[http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/cs\\_mentoring.html](http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/cs_mentoring.html)

Training is meant to develop the competencies employees need at each level of their career, and, equally important, provide a foundation for them to progress into areas of increased responsibility. Employees will want to adopt a career, rather than job focus. This means choosing courses based on what employees need to know to perform in their current position at the highest level and what they need to learn to advance to the next stage of their career. The following resources are available to assist you in devising training and career development strategies.

### ***Foreign Service Institute (FSI)***

The **Foreign Service Institute** (FSI) is the Federal government's primary training institution for officers and personnel of the U.S. foreign affairs community, preparing American diplomats and other professionals to advance U.S. foreign affairs interests overseas and in Washington, D.C. At the George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center, FSI provides more than 500 courses,





including 60 foreign languages, to more than 30,000 enrollees a year from the Department of State and on a reimbursable basis to more than 40 other government agencies and military service branches.

### ***Training Continua***

The following training continua are available on the FSI Intranet and will assist supervisors and employees in their planning:

- **Training Continuum for Civil Service Employees** -- A roadmap to training and professional development; and
- **Leadership and Management Training Continuum** -- Offers one-stop shopping for employees seeking to develop their leadership and management skills.

### ***Career Development Resource Center (CDRC)***

Another important resource available is the **Department's Career Development Resource Center (CDRC)**. The Center provides career development assistance and counseling to the Department's Civil Service employees and Foreign Service family members. The CDRC provides comprehensive career development services to help individuals make effective career decisions. Professional career counselors are available by appointment to provide individual and confidential counseling and coaching. There are also library and computer resources and workshops available to employees through the CDRC. *Visit the CDRC website for additional information. The CDRC is located in the SA-1 annex located in Columbia Plaza, 2401 E Street, N.W.*





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## ROADMAP - THE MERIT SYSTEM PRINCIPLES

### *What are the Merit System Principles?*

The **merit system principles** are the fundamental precepts which guide the conduct of Federal personnel management. They are the philosophic essence of various pieces of reform legislation developed over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (e.g. Civil Service Reform Act, Foreign Service Act of 1980). Thus, the principles are *implicit* in the laws, executive orders, rules, and regulations for administration of Federal Personnel Systems, and they are the *outcomes* that the merit system seeks to achieve.

### *Why are the Merit System Principles Important?*

The principles reflect the public's expectation that Federal Personnel Systems are effective, efficient, and fair; open to every citizen; free of political coercion; and served by persons who are honest, competent and dedicated to the public service.

They are also sound management precepts, and all managers and anyone who is in a position to take or influence personnel actions must ensure that their decisions and actions are consistent with the principles.

### *How did the Principles Come About?*

The merit system evolved over the course of American history in response to the troubles created by patronage under the "spoils system." The roots of political patronage -- the practice of making appointments to Government jobs to acquire political advantage -- extend back to ancient China where, ironically, the first merit system was developed. The sale of political offices existed in the Roman and Ottoman Empires and during the 17th century in both the French and English monarchies. So, the practice was not a uniquely American phenomenon.

In retrospect, perhaps the three most important "milestone" legislative acts leading to the development of the merit system principles were:

- The Pendleton Act of 1883
- The Intergovernmental Personnel Act of 1970, and
- The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.

## *Spoils ERA*

At the height of the “spoils era” (1829 – 1883), each change in national administration was the signal for wholesale removal of Government employees to provide jobs for the supporters of the new President, members of his party and party leaders, and sometimes for the leaders of a faction within the party. The struggles for jobs caused much bitterness, and jobs were openly bought and sold. Incompetence, graft, corruption, and outright theft were common. Indeed, one reformer charged that the spoils system encouraged prostitution!

## *Civil Service Reform Begins*

In 1881, President James A. Garfield was assassinated by a disgruntled job seeker while waiting to board a vacation train in Washington’s old Baltimore and Potomac railroad station. Garfield’s death gave new impetus to a Civil Service reform bill introduced six months earlier by Senator George Pendleton of Ohio and other powerful proponents of the merit system. Passed in 1883, this Act established procedures to assure that selections for certain Federal jobs would be open, competitive, and free of political coercion. Then, in the 1930’s, the Social Security Administration required States that received Federal grants to meet certain merit standards in their employment practices.

## *Final Reforms*

It was not until 1970, though, that the Intergovernmental Personnel Act required States receiving Federal funds to follow six merit principles. Prior to this, there was no clear expression of the principles as they apply to Federal personnel management. Finally, it was the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 which gave birth to the set of nine merit system principles and twelve prohibited **personnel practices** that we recognize today.

## *References*

Section 2301(b) of title 5, United States Code

## Merit System Principles

The Merit Principles listed below are adapted from the statutory language that appears in section 2301(b) of title 5, United States Code

1. **Recruit qualified individuals from all segments of society and select and advance employees on the basis of merit after fair and open competition.**
2. **Treat employees and applicants fairly and equitably, without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition. In addition, the Department of State prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation.**
3. **Provide equal pay for equal work and reward excellent performance.**
4. **Maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.**
5. **Manage employees efficiently and effectively.**
6. **Retain or separate employees on the basis of their performance.**
7. **Educate and train employees when it will result in better organizational or individual performance.**
8. **Protect employees from improper political influence.**
9. **Protect employees against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information in “whistleblower” situations (i.e., protect people who report things like illegal and /or wasteful activities).**



Bureau of Human Resources



United States Department of State

# CSP

## Office of Civil Service Personnel Management

Communication



Service



Professionalism

Issued September, 2002

### ROADMAP - PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICES

#### *What are the Prohibited Personnel Practices?*

The **prohibited personnel practices** are the specific actions which must be avoided by managers and all others who take or influence personnel actions. They are statutorily defined to enable Federal employees to avoid conduct which undermines the merit system principles and the integrity of the merit system.

According to the law, heads of executive agencies and individuals to whom they delegate personnel management authority are responsible for the prevention of prohibited personnel practices. Federal employees found guilty of engaging in these practices may be subject to disciplinary action including removal, demotion, debarment from Federal employment for a period not exceeding five years, suspension, reprimand, or a monetary fine.

#### *References*

Section 2302(b) of title, 5, United States Code.

# Prohibited Personnel Practices

**The Prohibited personnel practices listed below are adapted from the statutory language that appears in section 2302 (b) of title 5, U.S.Code.**

## **IT IS A PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICE TO:**

1. Discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age handicapping condition, marital status, or political affiliation. The Department prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation
2. Solicit or consider employment recommendations based on factors other than personal knowledge or records of job related abilities or characteristics.
3. Coerce an employee's political activity.
4. Deceive or willfully obstruct a person's right to compete for employment.
5. Influence any person to withdraw from competition for a position to improve or injure the employment prospects of any other person.
6. Give unauthorized preference or advantage to any person to improve or injure the employment prospects of any particular employee or applicant.
7. Employ or promote a relative.
8. Retaliate against a whistleblower, whether an employee or an applicant.
9. Retaliate against employees or applicants who exercise their appeal rights, testify or cooperate with an Inspector General or the Special Counsel, or refuse to break a law.
10. Discriminate based on personal conduct which is not adverse to on-the-job performance of the employee, applicant, or others.
11. Violate any law, rule, or regulation which implements or directly concerns the merit principles.
12. Knowingly violate veteran's preference requirements.



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## ROADMAP – HIRING – MERIT PROMOTION AND INTERNAL PLACEMENT

### *Purpose*

This Roadmap is intended to provide customers with a complete overview of hiring using the **Merit Promotion and Internal Placement** procedures. *(A snapshot of the Merit Promotion procedures is attached.)* These procedures are applied when hiring for positions in the competitive Civil Service.

### *Timeliness in Hiring*

Hiring does not have to be a long and labor-intensive process. Knowledge of the rules and honest and open communication between the hiring official and the human resource professionals, and upfront planning are key. The human resource staff *must* be at the table when key decisions on hiring are made.

### *Competitive Procedures*

For the most part, when filling positions covered by Title 5, the Merit System Principles and the following rules guide Civil Service hiring:

*The Department's Merit Promotion and Placement Program at 3 FAM 2310* guides us when hiring within State and from other Federal agencies; i.e. **Status** candidates; and

*The OPM Competitive Examining Process* guides us when hiring U.S. Citizens from outside of the Federal workforce to fill civil service positions. (See **Roadmap, Hiring via the OPM Competitive Examining Process at Appendix D** and at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/roadmaps.html>.)

### *Exceptions to Competition*

While competition is very much the norm in Federal hiring, certain individuals; i.e. those with **non-competitive** eligibility are allowed to bypass the competitive examining process and may enter the competitive Civil Service without having to compete with the general public. They may be appointed without competition in some cases, or they may compete under the Department of State's **Merit Promotion and Internal Placement** procedures. (See **Roadmap Hiring – Non-Competitive Eligible at Appendix G** and at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/roadmaps.html>.)

## APPENDIX C

### *Agency Merit Promotion Plans*

A Federal agency's **Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Program** *must* conform to the specific Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requirements set forth in Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations; specifically, Part 335, Promotion and Internal Placement. Agency Plans must ensure a systematic means of selection for promotion according to merit. Although Federal agency merit promotion plans may be different, agencies must follow OPM requirements.

### *State's Plan*

The Department's **Merit Promotion and Placement Program** (3 FAM 2310) provides an open, systematic, and equitable procedure for the identification, consideration, and selection of candidates for promotion on the basis of merit. Consideration, based on personal relationships, political patronage, or nepotism is not permitted. The Office of Civil Service Personnel Management (HR/CSP) manages the Department's Promotion and Placement Program.

### *Developing Assessment Tools*

Regardless of the competitive process used, an up-to-date **position description** is needed, a **job analysis** must be conducted; any **selective factor(s)** must be identified; and a **crediting or rating plan** must be developed.

The time devoted to reviewing and/or updating the position description and developing a quality job analysis and crediting/rating plan will be time well spent. These tools help to determine the best-qualified candidates and can also be used to develop questions for structured interviews.

Managers and supervisors must work in partnership with their bureau Executive Office in developing assessment tools for their positions. There is no need to wait until a vacancy occurs since these documents can always be reviewed and updated once created. Planning ahead is key.

### *Position Description*

A **position description** (PD) is the official description of management's assignment of major duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships to a position. An accurate position description reduces the risk of hiring an individual without the right knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies and is the roadmap to a successful hire.

### *Job Analysis*

A **job analysis** is a systematic, documented review of the job to determine what knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs), and competencies the worker must bring to the job to perform at a successful level.



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### *Selective Factors*

Selective placement factors are knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies or special qualifications that are in addition to the “minimum” qualification requirements for the job. When certain expertise, skills or competencies are critical for successful job performance and cannot be learned on the job within a reasonable period of time (usually 90 days), selecting officials may consider including a **selective placement factor** on the announcement. These factors are deemed so essential, (e.g., the need for a bilingual employee) that candidates who do not clearly demonstrate that they possess them are automatically screened out. **The selective factor cannot be so rigid that only someone working for the Department of State is able to meet the requirement.**

### *Determining Qualifications*

Selecting officials must determine the specific qualifications needed to do the job prior to announcing the position. The job analysis, position description and the **OPM Qualification Standards Handbook** facilitates this process. Keep in mind that OPM establishes the educational, licensing, medical and test requirements for all Title 5 occupations as well as the general or specialized experience requirements for certain occupations.

### *General & Specialized Experience*

Where OPM provides agencies with the flexibility to define the **general** and **specialized** experience requirements for a job, the human resources specialist calls upon the selecting official for guidance. How this experience is defined will ultimately help in determining whether candidates qualify for the job

### *Education*

Frequently education may be substituted for general and/or specialized experience requirements and this information must be included in the job announcement. Combinations of successfully completed post-high school education and experience may also be used to meet total qualification requirements for certain grade levels.

### *Written Rating or Crediting Plan (Manual Assessment)*

For the most part, when hiring using Merit Promotion procedures, a written rating or crediting plan is developed to describe the benchmarks for each of the levels at which candidates' experience, performance and/or education and training will be evaluated, (e.g. barely acceptable, acceptable, or superior). Each level is worth a specific number of points. Specific examples of how a candidate might demonstrate a particular knowledge, skill, ability or competency through work and/or volunteer experience, education, and training are described in the benchmarks for each level.

### *Recruitment Sources*

Hiring/Selecting officials in consultation with the human resource staff must decide the best source or **area of consideration** from which to recruit. The Department's Merit Promotion and Placement Program is utilized to evaluate applications received for jobs announced in the two areas of consideration discussed below.

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**1. Eligible Department of State (DOS) Employees Only:** When there is an adequate pool of highly qualified candidates **within** the Department, a selecting official may limit the area of consideration to *Eligible Department of State Employees Only*.

### Categories Included in this Area of Consideration

**Employees with Competitive Status.** Employees on the rolls of the Department of State with competitive status; i.e. current and former career and career-conditional employees who have served at least 90 days after a competitive appointment, may apply for a job under this area of consideration. (This includes Department employees working in a temporary capacity with reinstatement or non-competitive eligibility.)

- ✓ **Non-Competitive Eligibles.** Under this area of consideration any non-competitive eligible on the rolls of the Department, in a pay or non-duty status, may also apply *or* be selected outside of the vacancy announcement process when the individual meets all eligibility and qualification requirements for the job.
- ✓ **CTAP Candidates.** Department employees who may be separated, for example because of a reduction-in-force (RIF) receive special selection priority for Department jobs under our **Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP)**. To receive this priority consideration the employee must:
  - Apply for a job at or below the grade level of his/her current position and the job cannot have greater promotion potential than the job from which the employee is to be separated; and
  - Be determined well qualified for the position.

**2. Status, Non-competitive, Reinstatement, CTAP, ICTAP Candidates, & Eligible Veterans:** When considering candidates in this area of consideration, the Department's Merit Promotion and Internal Placement procedures apply.

### Categories Included in this Area of Consideration

## APPENDIX C

- ✓ **Competitive Status Candidates.** Current and former career Federal employees and career-conditional employees who have served at least 90 days after a competitive appointment may apply for a job opened to “status” candidates.
- ✓ **Non-competitive Eligibles.** These candidates are (1) individuals who have acquired non-competitive eligibility due to a specific appointing authority, as previously discussed; (2) a current Federal employee in the competitive service applying for a position having promotion potential no higher than the position they currently hold or previously held on a “permanent” basis.
- ✓ **Reinstatement candidates.** In certain circumstances, candidates are allowed to reenter the Federal competitive service workforce without competing with the general public. The candidate may be non-competitively reinstated at or below the grade level he/she held on a “permanent” basis **prior** to separating from the Federal service. The position to which the individual is reinstated **cannot**, however, have greater promotion potential beyond that which the individual either held or previously competed on a “permanent” basis. When the position has greater promotion potential, competition is required and the candidate is rated and ranked along with all other qualified candidates.
- ✓ Candidates eligible for special selection priority under the **Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP).** *See CTAP explanation under area of consideration in #1 above and ICTAP below.*
- ✓ **ICTAP Eligibles Only:** Prior to making a selection from **outside** of the Department’s workforce, we **must** give displaced Federal employees who are eligible for special section priority under the **Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP)** an opportunity to apply for the job. An ICTAP candidate who applies for the job and is determined to be “well-qualified;” i.e., ranked at the satisfactory or above level, **must** be selected over a candidate without special selection priority.

### *Announcement of Job*

Once the supervisor, in consultation with his/her human resource specialist, determines the qualifications for the job and the area(s) of consideration that will be utilized in filling the job, the job (in most cases) will be announced.

## APPENDIX C

When recruiting from outside of the Department, we must post announcements on the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) website at [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov). All Department of State vacancies are also posted on the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) Intranet and on the HR Internet website, [www.careers.state.gov](http://www.careers.state.gov), which links to the OPM USAJOBS website.

### *Open Period of Announcement*

Merit promotion job announcements at State are usually open from **five to ten** workdays. The minimum open period for the announcement is 5 working days.

### *Pre-employment Interview, Travel and Relocation Costs*

Prior to announcing the job, the Bureau's Assistant Secretary or designee must weigh the benefits of paying travel and relocation costs and/or pre-employment interview expenses to attract candidates. A decision to pay such expenses must be documented in the announcement. For specific details, refer to *3 FAM 3190, Pre-Employment Interview and Relocation Expenses for New Appointees*, <http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/03fam/03fam3190.doc>.

### *Submission of Applications*

Interested candidates submit their resumes to the office identified on the job announcement by fax, or e-mail. Supporting documentation such as college transcripts, rating factor responses (otherwise known as supplemental qualifications statements) and performance appraisals must also be received by the closing date.

### *Closing Date*

All application material must be received by the date specified in the announcement.

### *Qualifications Analysis*

For the most part, when examining for merit promotion, we use a manual assessment process. Based on the qualifications criteria previously established for the job, each application package is thoroughly reviewed to determine whether the candidate meets eligibility and the minimum qualification requirements for the job. Factors considered are whether the candidate is eligible for priority consideration, within the area of consideration, meets any time-in-grade, and minimum qualification requirements for the job, including selective placement factors.

### *Rating and Ranking*

Under the "manual" assessment process, a rating panel, usually comprised of two subject matter experts (SME) reviews the applications of all candidates who qualify to assess the extent to which the candidates possess the knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) and competencies identified in the job announcement. The Panel evaluates each candidate's application and assigns points based on the pre-determined benchmarks in the previously developed crediting/rating plan.

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### *Referral of Candidates*

Based on the points assigned by the rating panel, candidates are rated and rank ordered by score. The highest ranked candidates are then referred in *alphabetical* order on a *Certificate of Eligibles* for each grade level for which they qualify. Additionally, a non-competitive eligible is not rated or ranked. When qualified, the candidate(s) are referred on a separate Non-competitive Certificate of Eligibles. *Veteran's Preference* **does not** apply when using Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Procedures.

### *Importance of Interview*

Upon receiving a **Certificate of Eligibles** selecting officials must conduct a *thorough* review of all candidates' application material. A structured interview should be conducted to ensure that the best individual is selected for the job. While interviews are not required, they are strongly recommended. Interviews add an additional dimension to the selection process and are a way to assess candidates' oral and interpersonal skills, and whether they can think on their feet. In conducting interviews, the **Roadmap, Conducting Structured Interviews at Appendix J and at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/roadmaps.html>** may be helpful.

### *Interview One, Interview All*

Consistency is important to ensure fair and equitable treatment. If one candidate from a **merit promotion** certificate of eligibles is interviewed, **all** other candidates referred on that certificate **must** be interviewed.

### *Reference Checks*

Reference checks are also an integral part of the selection process and should be completed on **all** candidates under serious consideration for the job. Employers, former supervisors and colleagues can provide information on the candidate's qualifications, character, and general fitness for employment, work habits, and dependability. The information obtained completes the profile of the candidate and is critical to hiring the best person for the job.

### *Expiration of Certificates*

Selecting officials are generally given 45 days for *Merit Promotion* certificates, to make their selections. In extenuating situations, a selecting official may request an extension of the Certificate through his/her Executive Office. Otherwise, a Certificate of Eligibles that is not returned by the prescribed date will be cancelled.

### *Tentative and Final Offers of Employment*

Once the selecting official makes a selection, he/she must work with his/her bureau Executive Office in getting the employee on board. Prior to extending a *tentative offer* of employment and the *final confirmation* thereof, the selecting official must consider several issues.

Once the appropriate actions on the selectee's appointment have been completed, the bureau with delegated HRM authority or the Office of Civil Service Personnel Management's, Staffing Division (HR/CSP/S) takes the appropriate action to finalize the job offer and bring the employee on board.

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### *Temporary Provisional Appointments*

If a security clearance is required, an option the selecting official may want to consider is whether a *temporary provisional appointment* is appropriate.

In making this determination, the selecting official must determine whether (1) there is a sufficient amount of appropriate and **unclassified** work that can be performed *temporarily* without a security clearance; and (2) the work can be performed in an area where classified information is **not** stored, processed or discussed.

When the two requirements above can be met, the Executive Office can then determine the candidate's interest in accepting a *temporary provisional appointment*. The provisional employee and supervisor *must* sign a **statement of understanding** of the conditions of employment including the fact that the candidate's employment **will not** continue should a security clearance be denied. Once the candidate is granted a security clearance he/she is converted to the permanent appointment.

### *Superior Qualifications*

Selecting officials, in consultation with their Executive Office, should also determine whether there is a need to set a new appointee's salary above the step one of the grade. In considering this option, several factors must be considered such as whether the agency has a special need for the candidate's services or he/she is uniquely qualified for the job in comparison with other candidates; and is forfeiting income. Superior Qualifications Appointments must be approved by the Director of HR/CSP prior to the effective date of the appointment and the candidate entering on duty. (*See Roadmap, Superior Qualifications Appointments and 3 FAM 2280.*)

### *Recruitment Bonus*

Consideration should also be given to whether there is a need to seek approval for a **recruitment bonus** for an individual in lieu of or in addition to setting the individual's salary above the minimum rate of the grade. For guidance see *3 FAM 3180, Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses and Retention Allowances*.

### *Travel and Relocation Costs*

Should there be a decision to pay travel and relocation costs, the prospective employee must sign a continued service agreement, DS Form 5052. The agreement should be forwarded along with the tentative offer and must be signed before the employee enters on duty and commences travel. By signing this agreement, the individual agrees to remain in the service of the U. S. Government for 12 months following the date he/she reports for duty. *See 3 FAM 3190, Pre-Employment Interview and Relocation Expenses for New Appointees.*

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### *Submitting Complete Packages*

Ensuring that a **complete** package is submitted for a job announcement will enable the Office of Civil Service Personnel Management's Staffing Division to provide timelier service and reduce delays caused by missing information. The information required below constitutes a **complete** package for a Merit Promotion announcement.

1. **Request to post** -- include position location, organization code, clearance by HR/CSP/Classification, and (when applicable) the Office of Resource Management and Analysis (HR/RMA), priority consideration clearance number, and whether pre-employment interview and/or travel/relocation expenses may be paid.
2. **Classified Position Description (PD)** at each grade level.
3. **Job Analysis and Crediting/Rating Plan** for each grade level;
4. **Job Opportunity Announcement:** Diskette and printed copy of word processing version with:
  - a) Position title, series, and grade;
  - b) Promotion potential;
  - c) Office and location;
  - d) Security clearance required;
  - e) Supervisory identifier;
  - f) Area of consideration;
  - g) Description of duties;
  - h) Number of vacancies;
  - i) Other relevant information (*e.g., travel, shift work*);
  - j) Examples of qualifying specialized experience; and
  - k) Ranking factors.

### *Staffing the "Action"*

Once a **complete package** is received, HR/CSP/S takes the following staffing actions to ensure that appropriate certificates of eligibles will be issued within 30 to 35 working days.

1. Check priority consideration lists if position has not been cleared.
2. Review PD, approve evaluation criteria, and establish qualification requirements.
3. Prepare job announcement and submit to Staffing Chief for review;
4. Upload announcement onto **www.usa.jobs** and other websites.
5. Announcement opens for receipt of applications.
6. Based on date specified in announcement await receipt of mailed applications (if being accepted) and additional application material.
7. Convene rating panel;
8. Review panel findings; and
9. Print instructions and issue certificate(s).

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When a bureau Executive Office has delegated Human Resource Management (HRM) authority, similar procedures and timeframes should be established and disseminated to hiring officials

### *References*

5 CFR 300,  
5 CFR 335,

*Article 14, Section 4*, Negotiated Labor-Management Agreement between the Department of State and the American Federation of Government Employees, Local 1534,

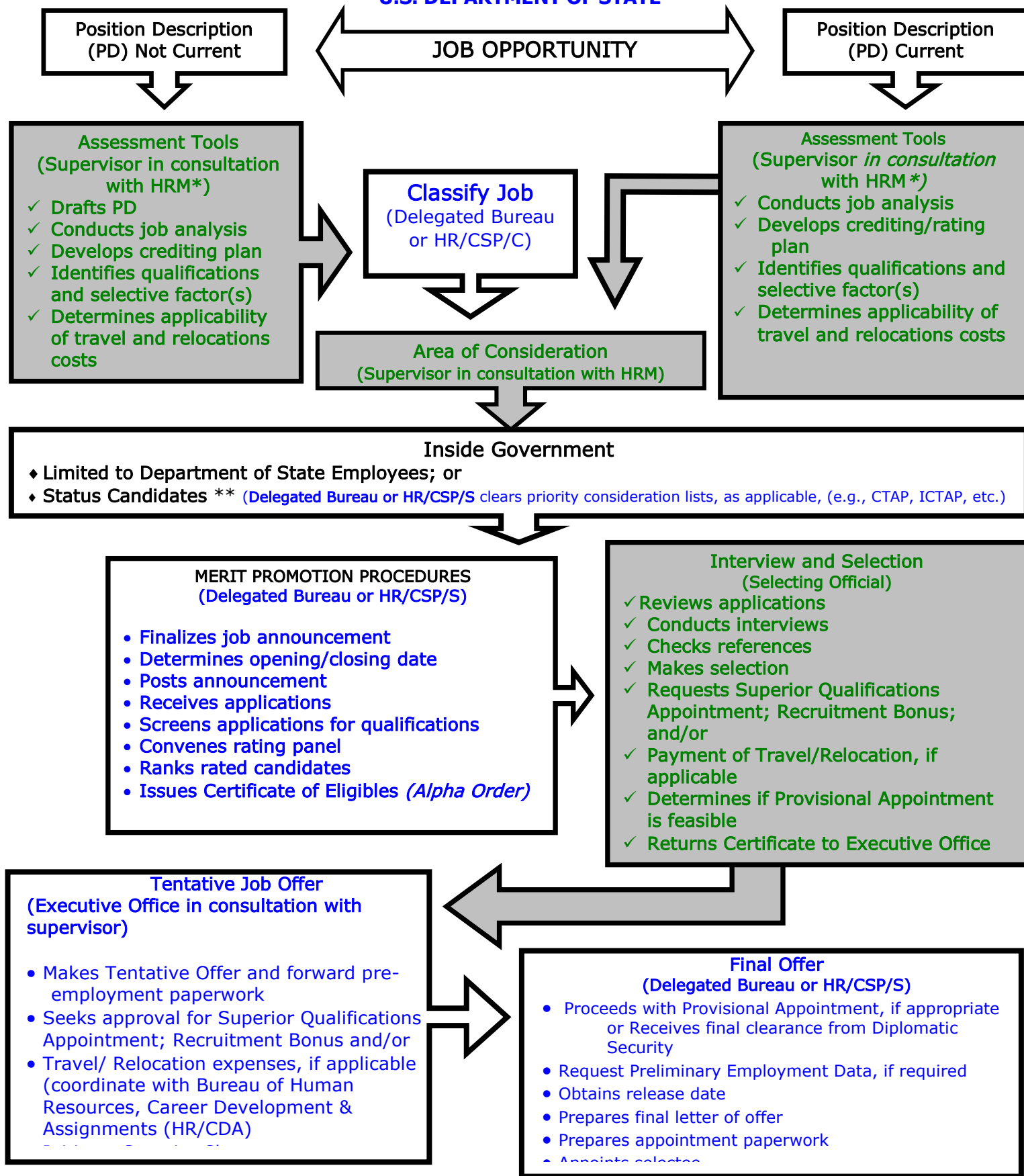
3 FAM 2310, Merit Promotion and Placement Program,  
Guide, Demystifying the Civil Service Hiring Process.

### **More Information**

The Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) website at [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov).  
Contact the Bureau Executive Office.  
Consult with the HR/CSP Staffing Division Specialists.

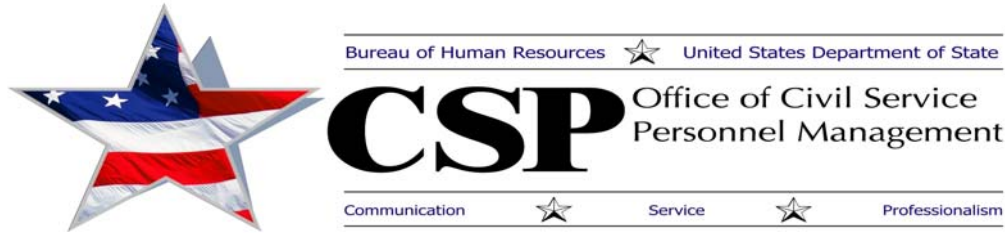


# **SNAPSHOT - MERIT PROMOTION & INTERNAL PLACEMENT PROCESS** Appendix C U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



**Green/Check Mark** = Supervisor **Blue/Dot** = Human Resource Staff. \* HRM = Human Resource Management \*\*Includes Status, Reinstatement Non-competitive, Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan Candidates (ICTAP) & Eligible Veterans. Note: All processes may not be required in certain situations. Consult with appropriate human resource staff.

## APPENDIX D



Issued July 2003

### ROADMAP – THE COMPETITIVE EXAMINING PROCESS

#### *Purpose*

This *Roadmap* is intended to provide customers with a complete overview of hiring using the Competitive Examining Process. These procedures are applied when hiring for positions in the competitive Civil Service. *(A snapshot of the Competitive Examining Process is attached.)*

#### *Timeliness in Hiring*

Hiring does not have to be a long and labor-intensive process. Knowledge of the rules and honest and open communication between the hiring official and the human resource professionals, and upfront planning are key. The human resource staff *must* be at the table when key decisions on hiring are made.

#### *Competitive Procedures*

To secure an initial Civil Service appointment in the competitive service, most candidates must compete with the general public for the job. This is generally accomplished through an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) process called *competitive examining*.

#### *OPM Competitive Examining Process*

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) competitive examining process is the application of OPM prescribed rules and regulations in evaluating applications for a specific position from an All Sources announcement opened to all qualified U. S. citizens. (5 CFR 337).

The job seeker applies directly for a position and is evaluated using job-related knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) and competencies.

Unlike merit promotion procedures, competitive examining *requires* the application of **veterans preference**; i.e., preference eligibles have **5** or **10** additional points added to their score. Candidates are to be referred in score order rather than alphabetical and **must** be selected in a certain order; i.e., the rule of three.

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### *Exceptions to Competition*

While competition is very much the norm in Federal hiring, certain individuals; i.e. those with **non-competitive** eligibility are allowed to bypass the competitive examining process and may enter the competitive Civil Service without having to compete with the general public as described in the *Roadmap, Hiring a Non-competitive Eligible* at **Appendix G**. They may be appointed without competition in some cases, or they may compete under the Department of State's *Merit Promotion and Internal Placement* procedures found in the *Roadmap, Hiring – Merit Promotion and Placement Procedures* at **Appendix C**.

### *Delegated Competitive Examining Authority*

Competitive examining is conducted either by: an agency that has been delegated examining authority by OPM; contracting with an Office of Personnel Management Service Center; or contracting with a certified Examining Office of another Federal agency on a reimbursable basis. Individuals conducting competitive examining must be trained and certified as a delegated examiner by OPM.

### *Competitive Examining at State*

Unless a specific exception is approved by OPM, the Office of Civil Service Personnel Management (HR/CSP) conducts competitive examining at State. When hiring via the All Sources area of consideration, Bureaus with delegated authority are required to use one of the OPM Service Centers for competitive examining.

Currently, competitive examining at State is conducted using OPM's automated assessment tool called **USA Staffing**.

### *Developing the Assessment Tools*

Regardless of the competitive process used, an up-to-date **position description** is needed, a **job analysis** must be conducted; any **selective factor(s)** must be identified; and a **crediting or rating plan** must be developed.

The time devoted to reviewing and/or updating the position description and developing a quality job analysis and crediting/rating plan will be time well spent. These tools help to determine the best-qualified candidates and can also be used to develop questions for structured interviews.

Managers and supervisors must work in partnership with their bureau Executive Office in developing assessment tools for their positions. There is no need to wait until a vacancy occurs since these documents can always be reviewed and updated once created. Planning ahead is key.

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### *Position Description*

A **position description (PD)** is the official description of management's assignment of major duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships to a position. An accurate position description reduces the risk of hiring an individual without the right knowledge, skills, abilities, and competencies and is the roadmap to a successful hire.

### *Job Analysis*

A **job analysis** is a systematic, documented review of the job to determine what knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs), and competencies the worker must bring to the job to perform at a successful level.

### *Selective Factors*

Selective placement factors are knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies or special qualifications that are in addition to the "minimum" qualification requirements for the job.

When certain expertise, skills or competencies are critical for successful job performance and cannot be learned on the job within a reasonable period of time (usually 90 days), selecting officials may consider including a **selective placement factor** on the announcement. These factors are deemed so essential, (e.g., the need for a bilingual employee) that candidates who do not clearly demonstrate that they possess them are automatically screened out. **The selective factor cannot be so rigid that only someone working for the Department of State is able to meet the requirement.**

### *Determining Qualifications*

Selecting officials must determine the specific qualifications needed to do the job prior to announcing the position. The job analysis, position description and the **OPM Qualification Standards Handbook** facilitate this process. Keep in mind that OPM establishes the educational, licensing, medical and test requirements for all Title 5 occupations as well as the general or specialized experience requirements for certain occupations.

### *General & Specialized Experience*

Where OPM provides agencies with the flexibility to define the **general** and **specialized** experience requirements for a job, the human resources specialist calls upon the selecting official for guidance. How this experience is defined will ultimately help in determining whether candidates qualify for the job.

### *Education*

Frequently education may be substituted for general and/or specialized experience requirements and this information must be included in the job announcement. Combinations of successfully completed post-high school education and experience may also be used to meet total qualification requirements for certain grade levels.

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### *USA Staffing (Automated Assessment Tool)*

The **USA Staffing** tool is an automated questionnaire that is developed by the human resource specialist in consultation with the selecting official or a subject matter expert.

This questionnaire automates both the qualifications and the rating processes. The questionnaire is based on the position description and job analysis process. Benchmarks or task statements and selective factors are incorporated into the questionnaire. Questions may be weighted based on the requirements for the job.

Candidates record their answers to the questionnaire and scores are automatically tallied based on the weights assigned to each question. The USA Staffing tool then ranks job applicants based on their responses to each of the pre-weighted questions. The Tool automatically flags the records of applicants requiring adjudication of veteran preference based on candidates' responses on the questionnaire.

In addition, the human resources specialist closely compares the answers to the questions and the application submitted by the candidate to ensure that there are no discrepancies between the answers on the questionnaire and the candidate's level of experience.

### *All Sources Area of Consideration*

If a selecting official decides to fill a position via the broadest recruitment source available, he/she will consider the applications of candidates who are "outside" as well as "within" the Federal government. That is the "**All Sources**" area of consideration and the OPM Competitive Examining rules are used.

All sources announcements afford an opportunity for **U.S. Citizens** in the private and public sectors as well as Federal employees who do not have civil service status to compete for employment opportunities in the competitive service. It also enables lower graded Federal employees who have higher level qualifying experience to compete for promotion opportunities by bypassing the one-year time-in-grade requirement. Individuals, however, must meet all OPM qualification requirements; i.e., education and/or specialized experience equivalent to the next lower grade level of the advertised job.

### *Caveats*

Prior to making a selection from **outside** of the Department's workforce, displaced Department employees who are eligible for special selection priority under the **Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP)** requirements **must** be selected when they apply and are deemed well-qualified for the job. (**5 CFR 330, Subpart F**).

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Additionally, displaced Federal employees who apply through an All Sources job announcement and are deemed well-qualified are eligible for special selection priority **under Interagency Career Transition Plan (ICTAP)** requirements. These individuals **must** be selected over a candidate without special selection priority. Exceptions to ICTAP requirements are at 5 CFR 330.705 (c).

### *Announcement of Job*

Once the supervisor, in consultation with his/her human resource specialist, determines the qualifications for the job and the area(s) of consideration that will be utilized in filling the job, the job (in most cases) will be announced.

When recruiting from **outside** of the Department, we *must* post announcements on the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) website at [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov). All Department of State vacancies are also posted on the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) Intranet and on the HR Internet website, [www.careers.state.gov](http://www.careers.state.gov), which links to the OPM USAJOBS website.

### *Open Period of Announcement*

Job announcements at State are usually open for **five** or **ten** workdays. The minimum open period for the announcement is 5 working days.

### *Pre-employment Interview, Travel and Relocation Costs*

Prior to announcing the job, the Bureau's Assistant Secretary or designee must weigh the benefits of paying travel and relocation costs and/or pre-employment interview expenses to attract candidates. A decision to pay such expenses must be documented in the announcement. Bureaus may pay these expenses when it is in the interest of the government and not primarily for the convenience of the individual. For specific details, refer to **3 FAM 3190, Pre-Employment Interview and Relocation Expenses for New Appointees**, <http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/03fam/03fam3190.doc>.

When it is in the interest of the Federal government, a Bureau may pay expenses for pre-employment interviews. Interview expenses are bureau funded, **not** centrally funded. In deciding whether to interview an out of state candidate via phone or in person, consideration must be given to the criteria set forth in **3 FAM 3190, Pre-employment Interview and Relocations Expenses for New Appointees**.

<http://arpsdir.a.state.gov/fam/03fam/03fam3190.doc>.

### *Submission of Applications*

Interested candidates submit their resumes to the office identified on the job announcement by one of the methods stated in the announcement: mail, fax, or e-mail or on-line using the USA Staffing process discussed above. Supporting documentation such as college transcripts, rating factor responses (otherwise known as supplemental qualifications statements) and documentation of veterans preference must also be received by the closing date in the announcement.



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<b><i>Closing Date</i></b>	All application related material must be received by the date specified in the announcement.
<b><i>Rating and Ranking</i></b>	Since candidates apply through <b>USA Staffing</b> , the rating and ranking process is automated. Once veterans preference and/or special selection priority under CTAP and/or ICTAP is verified and the specialist ensures there are no discrepancies, the Certificate of Eligibles is issued.
<b><i>Referral of Candidates</i></b>	A Certificate of Eligibles (Certificate) is a list of the highest ranked candidates in score and veterans preference order, submitted to a selecting official for consideration in accordance with the competitive selection laws and regulations. If a selecting official requests that the position be announced at more than one grade he/she may receive multiple certificates from which to consider candidates. Currently, candidates who are preference eligibles have five or ten extra points added to their score.
<b><i>Importance of Interview</i></b>	Upon receiving a <b>Certificate of Eligibles</b> selecting officials must conduct a <i>thorough</i> review of candidates' application material. A structured interview should be conducted to ensure that the best individual is selected for the job. While interviews are not required, they are strongly recommended. Interviews add an additional dimension to the selection process and are a way to assess candidates' oral and interpersonal skills, and whether they can think on their feet. In conducting interviews, the <b><i>Roadmap, Conducting Structured Interviews</i></b> at <b>Appendix J</b> and <a href="http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/roadmaps.html">http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/roadmaps.html</a> may be helpful.
<b><i>Rule of Three</i></b>	When interviewing candidates referred under the <i>OPM Competitive Examining Process</i> , the <b><i>rule of three</i></b> applies. Currently, only the top three available candidates may be considered for a single vacancy. Unless there are multiple positions to fill or someone in the group of three withdraws or is removed from consideration for a valid reason, it may not be prudent to interview more than the top three candidates on the Certificate.
<b><i>Objection to Eligible/Pass Over procedures</i></b>	In the competitive examining process, a higher ranked veteran <b>must</b> be selected before any non-veteran. Keep in mind that <i>selecting officials may not <b>pass over</b> a veteran to select a candidate who is not a veteran unless a <b>written objection</b> is submitted to and sustained by the Director of HR/CSP or OPM.</i>

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A written objection is a request to remove any eligible from consideration when a selecting official feels that one of the highest-ranking eligibles does not meet the requirements (e.g., qualification requirements). This action is called an **objection to eligible** for a non-preference eligible and a **pass over** for a preference eligible.

### *Reference Checks*

Reference checks are also an integral part of the selection process and should be completed on **all** candidates under serious consideration for the job. Employers, former supervisors and colleagues can provide information on the candidate's qualifications, character, general fitness for employment, work habits, and dependability. The information obtained completes the profile of the candidate and is critical to hiring the best person for the job.

### *Annotating and Return of Certificate*

Selecting officials must report their actions taken on a Certificate of Eligibles by noting the appropriate action symbol beside the name of each individual referred for appointment consideration (e.g., ns=non-selection, A =selection, d=candidate declined). The appropriate codes to be used for this reporting by the selecting official are provided with the Certificate of Eligibles.

### *Auditing the Certificate*

Once the selecting official takes final action on the Certificate, he/she must sign, date and return the completed certificate and all application material and attachments to the appropriate staff member. To ensure conformance to OPM and Department procedures, the assigned human resource specialist must conduct an audit of the Certificate to ensure that it has been properly annotated and that proper procedures have been followed in accordance with the competitive selection laws and regulations.

### *Inappropriate Comments*

Certain notations on a certificate by a selecting official may reflect that improper procedures were followed and may result in cancellation of the certificate. These notations might, for example, include documentation of a candidate's birth date, race or religion. In such cases, the human resource specialist **must** verify that proper procedures were followed.

### *Expiration of Certificates*

Selecting officials are generally given 60 days to make their selection when hiring via the competitive examining process. In extenuating situations, a selecting official may request an extension of the Certificate through his/her Executive Office. Otherwise, a Certificate of Eligibles that is not returned by the prescribed date will be cancelled.



## APPENDIX D

### *Conditions of Employment*

A current Federal employee selected for appointment from a Certificate of Eligibles may be required to serve a new **one-year probationary period**. In addition, selectees for permanent competitive appointments may not be promoted to a higher grade, or reassigned to a different geographical area or line of work for **90 days after competitive appointment**.

### *Tentative Offer of Employment*

Once the selecting official makes a selection, he/she must work with his/her bureau Executive Office in getting the employee on board. Prior to extending a *tentative offer* of employment and the *final confirmation* thereof, the selecting official must consider several issues.

### *Temporary Provisional Appointments*

If a security clearance is required, an option the selecting official may want to consider is whether a **temporary provisional appointment** is appropriate.

In making this determination, the selecting official must determine whether (1) there is a sufficient amount of appropriate and **unclassified** work that can be performed *temporarily* without a security clearance; and (2) the work can be performed in an area where classified information is **not** stored, processed or discussed.

When the two requirements above can be met, the Executive Office can then determine the candidate's interest in accepting a *temporary provisional appointment*. The provisional employee and supervisor *must* sign a **statement of understanding** of the conditions of employment including the fact that the candidate's employment **will not** continue should a security clearance be denied. Once the candidate is granted a security clearance he/she is converted to the permanent appointment.

### *Superior Qualifications*

Selecting officials, in consultation with their Executive Office, should also determine whether there is a need to set a new appointee's salary above the step one of the grade. In considering this option, several factors must be considered such as whether the agency has a special need for the candidate's services or he/she is uniquely qualified for the job in comparison with other candidates; and is forfeiting income. Superior Qualifications Appointments must be approved by the Director of HR/CSP **prior** to the effective date of the appointment and the candidate entering on duty. (See *Roadmap, Superior Qualifications Appointments* and 3 FAM 2280.)

### *Recruitment Bonus*

Consideration should also be given to whether there is a need to seek approval for a **recruitment bonus** for an individual in lieu of or in addition to setting the individual's salary above the minimum rate of the grade. For guidance see 3 FAM 3180, *Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses and Retention Allowances*.

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### *Travel and Relocation Costs*

Should there be a decision to pay travel and relocation costs, the prospective employee must sign a continued service agreement, DS Form 5052. The agreement should be forwarded along with the tentative offer and must be signed before the employee enters on duty and commences travel. By signing this agreement, the individual agrees to remain in the service of the U. S. Government for 12 months following the date he/she reports for duty. See *3 FAM 3190, Pre-Employment Interview and Relocation Expenses for New Appointees*.

### *Tentative Offer of Employment*

Once the selecting official considers the options and issues discussed above, he/she should coordinate with the bureau Executive Office to make a tentative offer of employment to the selectee. The bureau Executive Office then takes the appropriate actions to make the tentative job offer, initiate the security clearance, seek approval for superior qualifications appointment, a recruitment bonus, and/or travel/relocation expenses, if applicable.

### *Final Offer of Employment*

Once the appropriate actions on the selectee's appointment have been completed, the bureau with delegated HRM authority or the Office of Civil Service Personnel Management's Staffing Division (HR/CSP/S) takes the appropriate action to finalize the job offer and bring the individual on board.

### *Category Ratings*

In 2002, Congress enacted the Homeland Security Act. The Act authorizes Federal agencies to use alternative ranking and selection procedures. Candidates can be referred to the selecting official using a process called **Category Ratings**. Instead of a numerical rating being assigned, applicants can be placed in a group based on overall "quality" of experience. Veterans must be placed at the top of the category for consideration within each quality group. **The Department has not yet implemented this rating system.**

### *Submitting Complete Packages*

Ensuring that a **complete** package is submitted for a job announcement will enable the Office of Civil Service Personnel Management's Staffing Division (HR/CSP/S) to provide timelier service and reduce delays caused by missing information. The information described below constitutes a **complete package** for an All Sources job announcement:

1. **Request to post** -- include position location, organization code, clearance by HR/CSP/Classification, and (when applicable) the Office of Resource Management and Analysis (HR/RMA), priority consideration clearance number, and whether pre-employment interview and/or travel/relocation expenses may be paid.
2. **Classified Position Description (PD)** at each grade level.

## APPENDIX D

3. **Job Analysis and Crediting/Rating Plan** for each grade level;
4. **SF-39, Request for Referral of Eligibles** with:
  - a. Position title, series, and grade; duty location;
  - b. Promotion potential;
  - c. Security clearance required;
  - d. Supervisory identifier;
  - e. Number of vacancies;
  - f. Other relevant information (e.g., travel, shift work);
  - g. Selective Factor and supporting documentation (if applicable);
  - h. Subject Matter Expert name and telephone number; and
  - i. Name, address, Social Security Number of name request (if applicable).

### *Staffing the Action*

Once a complete request is received, HR/CSP/S takes the following staffing actions to ensure that appropriate Certificates of Eligibles will be issued within **30 to 60** working days from receipt of complete package in HR/CSP/S.

1. Check priority consideration lists if position has not been cleared.
2. Review PD, approve evaluation criteria, and establish qualification requirements.
3. Prepare USA Staffing questionnaire and return it to selecting official and/or subject matter expert (SME) for approval.
4. Review changes and finalize questionnaire accordingly.
5. Upload announcement onto [www.usa.jobs](http://www.usa.jobs) and other websites.
6. Announcement opens for receipt of applications.
7. Based on date specified in announcement await receipt of mailed applications (if being accepted) and additional application material.
8. Determine candidates' eligibility and verify information claimed (e.g., veterans preference).
9. Print instructions and issue Certificate(s) of Eligibles.

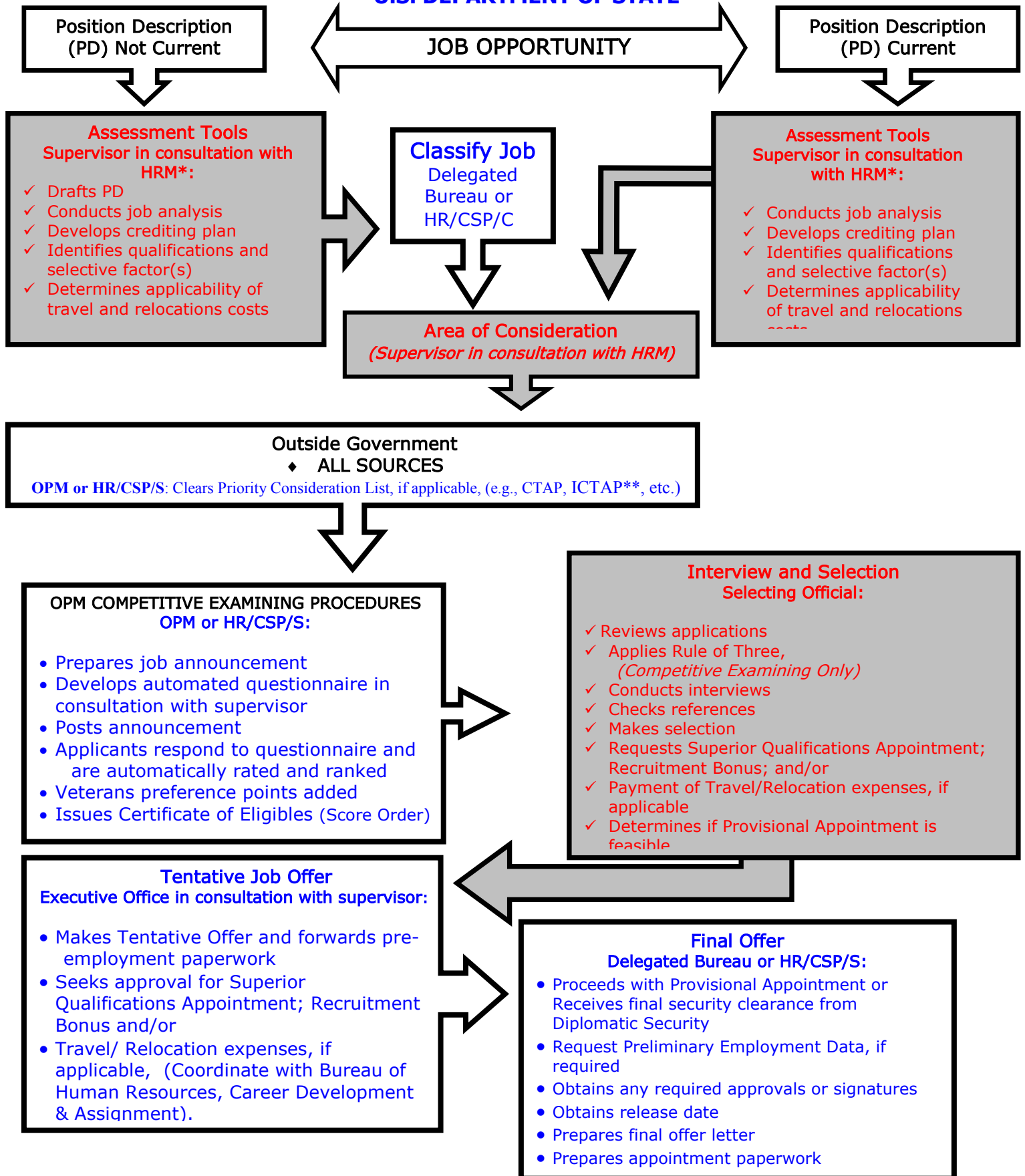
### *References*

5 CFR 337, Examining System  
5 CFR Part 332, Recruitment and Selection through Competitive Examination  
5 CFR Part 211, Veteran Preference  
5 CFR 330, Recruitment, Placement, and Selection (General)  
3 FAM 2900, Career Transition Assistance for Surplus and Displaced Employees  
Guide, Demystifying the Civil Service Hiring Process

### *More Information*

The Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) website at: [www.opm.gov](http://www.opm.gov) is an excellent source.  
Contact the Bureau Executive Office  
Consult with HR/CSP Staffing Division Specialist.

# SNAPSHOT - THE COMPETITIVE EXAMINING PROCESS **Appendix D** U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



**Red/Check Mark** = Supervisor. **Blue/Dot** = Human Resource Staff. \*HRM = Human Resource Management. \*\* Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP). Note: All of the processes may not be applicable in certain circumstances. Consult with appropriate human resource staff.



Bureau of Human Resources ★ United States Department of State

# CSP Office of Civil Service Personnel Management

Communication



Service



Professionalism

Issued July, 2003

## ROADMAP – CIVIL SERVICE HIRING -HOW CAN HR HELP?

In addition to the Bureau Executive Office, the following offices in the Bureau of Human Resources (HR) can assist:

### *Office of Civil Service Personnel Management (HR/CSP):*

- ✓ **Classification Division** - Advises and assists Bureaus/Offices on reorganizations, position management and other policy issues. Classifies Civil Service and domestic Foreign Service jobs for all bureaus, with the exception of those Civil Service positions for which classification authority has been delegated.
- ✓ **Staffing Division** - Advises Bureaus/Offices on how best to attract, hire, and retain a skilled, motivated, diverse, and flexible workforce. Issues vacancy announcements and evaluates applications. Reviews and approves personnel and staffing actions except those initiated by bureaus with delegated human resources management (HRM) authority.
- ✓ **Executive Resources and Performance Management Division** - Coordinates and processes hiring actions associated with the Senior Executive Service (SES), Presidential and Schedule C appointments. Manages the performance systems for all Civil Service and SES positions.
- ✓ **Career Development Division** – Develops, implements, and administers career and professional development programs. Assists in developing master training and individual development plans, and provides career counseling and related services to Civil Service employees and Foreign Service family members.

### ***Office of Resource Management and Organization Analysis (HR/RMA)***

- Provides a number of services under the broad umbrella of resource management including workforce planning, compensation policy and position management. Reviews and approves the structure of organizations; manages and approves the establishment, abolishment, or reprogramming, as appropriate, of all Department of State positions. Directs a workload measurement program and manages the Department's full-time equivalent (FTE) system including allocating FTE ceilings to bureaus and realigning allocations based upon changing needs and priorities.

### ***Office of Recruitment (HR/REE/REC)***

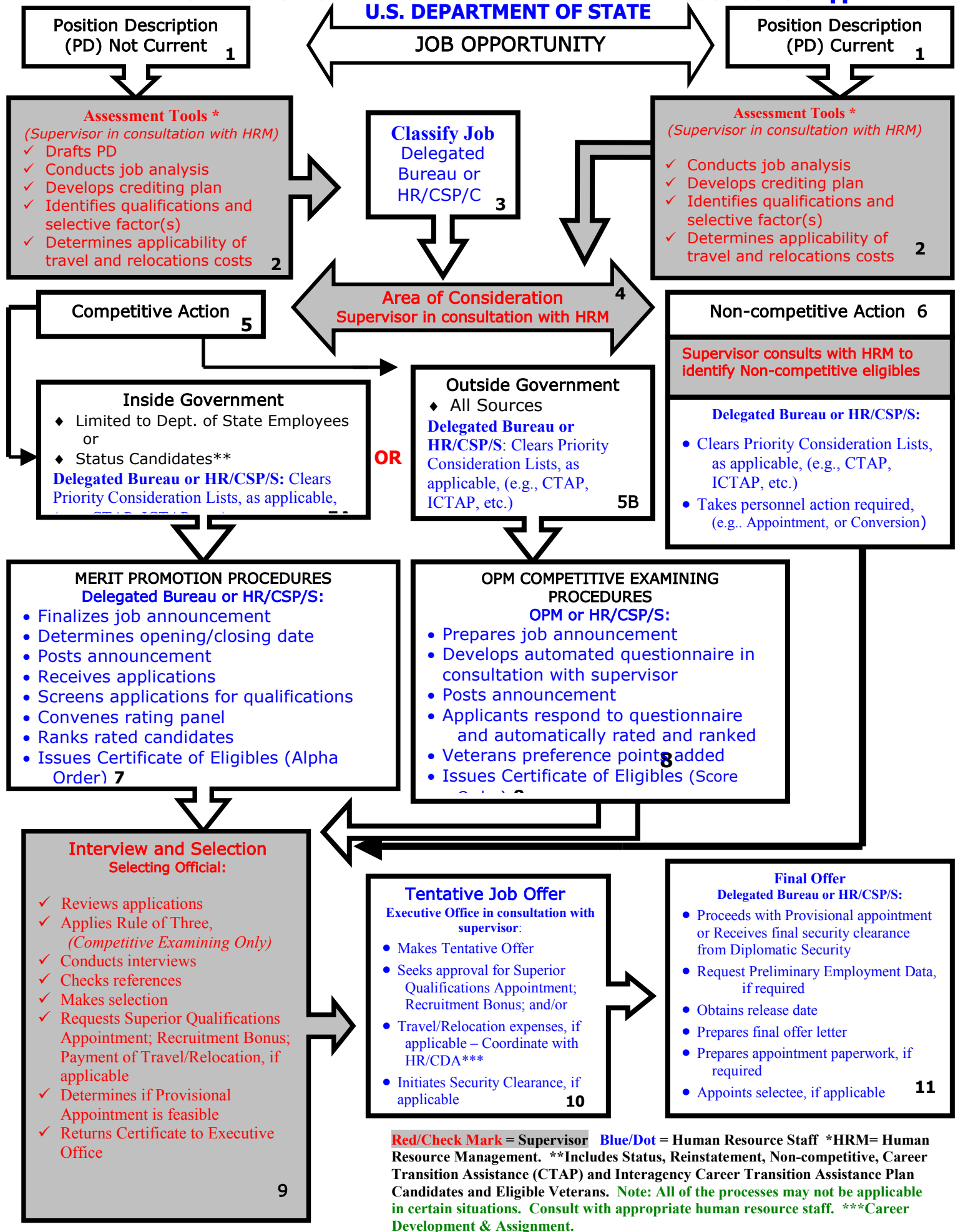
- Responsible for recruitment – to meet both the Foreign Service (FS) and Civil Service (CS) staffing needs of the Department. This includes outreach for special emphasis programs, conducting targeted recruitment, and managing the Department's student employment programs that enable students to gain experience in a foreign affairs environment.

***Executive Office (HR/EX)*** – The **Executive Office of HR** contains Divisions that serve the entire State Department community. Systems Development, Systems Operations and Records Management are responsible for programs such as the HR Knowledge Center, GEMS, IFSAMA, Reports, Post Assignment Travel, and Official Personnel Folders (OPF).

***Family Liaison Office (M/DGHR/FLO)*** -- Improves the quality of life for Foreign Service families serving abroad by identifying issues and advocating for solutions. The Employment Section advises and counsels family members on employment options both inside and outside overseas missions and provides employment resource information for re-entry into the U.S. job market. FLO helps family members employed in U.S. Government positions overseas to transition into Civil Service positions in the U.S. by providing guidance on regulations and current hiring practices. FLO also assists offices seeking qualified candidates with Executive Order Eligibility.



# A SNAPSHOT OF THE CIVIL SERVICE HIRING PROCESSES Appendix F U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

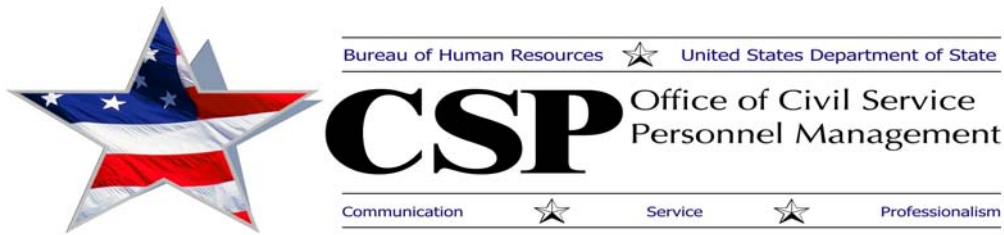


The **topics** below correspond to the numbered boxes in **A Snapshot of the Civil Service Hiring Processes**. Information related to these topics is cross-referenced with the guide, **Demystifying the Civil Service Hiring Process**, along with the appropriate page number(s).

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Guide Reference</b>	<b>Page Number</b>
<b>1. Position Description</b>	Workforce Management Developing Assessment Tools	7 10
<b>2. Assessment Tools:</b>		
<b>Job Analysis</b>	Developing Assessment Tools	11
<b>Crediting Plan</b>	Developing Assessment Tools	12
<b>Qualifications</b>	Foundation and Authority for What We Do Developing Assessment Tools	3 11
<b>Selective Factors</b>	Developing Assessment Tools	11
<b>Travel and Relocation Costs</b>	Announcement of Job Tentative and Final Offers of Employment	18 24
<b>3. Classify Job</b>	Workforce Management Developing Assessment Tools	7 10
<b>4. Area of Consideration</b>	Recruitment Sources – Factors to Consider	14
<b>5. Competitive Action</b>	Competitive Service Hiring	8
<b>5A. Inside Government, Limited to DOS</b>	Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Procedures Recruitment Sources – Factors to Consider Appendix C, Hiring – Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Procedures	4 14
<b>5A. Inside Government, Status Only</b>	Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Procedures Recruitment Sources – Factors to Consider Appendix C, Hiring – Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Procedures	4 15
<b>5B. Outside Government, All Sources</b>	OPM Competitive Examining Process Recruitment Sources- Factors to Consider Appendix D, Hiring – Competitive Examining Process	4 16
<b>6. Non-competitive Action</b>	Exceptions to Competition Recruitment Sources – Factors to Consider Appendix G, Hiring a Non-competitive Eligible	8 14
<b>7. Merit Promotion Procedures</b>	Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Process Announcement of Job Assessment and Referral of Candidates Appendix C, Hiring – Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Procedures	4 18 19
<b>8. Open Competitive Examining Procedures</b>	OPM Competitive Examining Process Announcement of Job Assessment and Referral of Candidates Appendix D, Hiring – Competitive Examining Process	4 18 19
<b>9. Review, Interview and Selection</b>	Interviews and Selection	21
<b>10. Tentative Job Offer</b>	Tentative and Final Offers of Employment	24
<b>11. Confirm the Appointment</b>	Tentative and Final Offers of Employment	24



## APPENDIX G



Issued July, 2003

### ROADMAP - **HIRING A NON-COMPETITIVE ELIGIBLE**

<b><i>Purpose</i></b>	This Roadmap is intended to provide customers with a complete overview of the process for hiring an individual with <b>Non-competitive eligibility</b> . ( <i>A snapshot of the Non-competitive hiring process is attached.</i> ) These procedures are applied when hiring for positions in the competitive Civil Service.
<b><i>Timeliness in Hiring</i></b>	Hiring does not have to be a long and labor-intensive process. Knowledge of the rules and honest and open communication between the hiring official and the human resource professionals, and upfront planning are key. The human resource staff <i>must</i> be at the table when key hiring decisions are made.
<b><i>Competitive Procedures</i></b>	To secure an initial Civil Service appointment in the competitive service, most candidates must compete with the general public for the job. This is generally accomplished through an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) process called <i>competitive examining</i> .
<b><i>Exceptions to Competition</i></b>	While competition is very much the norm in Federal hiring, certain individuals; i.e. those with <b>non-competitive</b> eligibility are allowed to bypass the competitive examining process and may enter the competitive Civil Service without having to compete with the general public. They may be appointed without competition in some cases, or they may compete under the Department of State's <b>Merit Promotion and Internal Placement</b> procedures, described in the <b>Roadmap</b> at <b>Appendix C</b> and at <a href="http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/roadmaps.html">http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/roadmaps.html</a> .
<b><i>Eligibility</i></b>	To acquire non-competitive eligibility, generally, an individual must meet the particular requirements specified in a non-competitive appointing authority established by law or Executive Order set forth in Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, at 5 CFR 213 and 315 or the applicable Executive Order.
<b><i>Conditions of Employment</i></b>	The non-competitive hiring authority, for which a candidate is eligible, will specify the requirements and conditions that must be met before an appointment is made. For instance, a particular non-competitive appointment may have a service requirement or a specified period of time by which an individual must be appointed.

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### *Who May be Considered?*

There are two broad categories of non-competitive candidates:

1. An individual who acquired non-competitive eligibility due to a specific authority (*See Sampling of Non-competitive Appointment Authorities attached*); and
  2. A current or former Federal employee in the competitive service seeking a position having promotion potential no higher than the position they currently hold or previously held on a “permanent” basis.
- ✓ A **current** Federal employee is considered to be a non-competitive eligible when **he/she currently holds or previously held** a position in the competitive service on a **permanent** basis having promotion potential **equal to or greater** than the position for which being considered for selection. (*A SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action is required to document proof of eligibility.*) This individual can be laterally reassigned, promoted or re-promoted to a position within the Department *or* may transfer to the Department laterally or at a higher grade than he/she previously held when qualified for the job and the above requirements are met.

**Example:** An employee in the Bureau of Consular Affairs currently occupies a GS-201-11 position that has promotion potential to the GS-12 level. The employee was previously on a GS-343-9 career appointment at Agriculture with promotion potential to the GS-343-13 grade level. Can the employee be reassigned to a GS-201 position if the promotion potential of the job is at the GS-13 grade level? Yes, the employee may be non-competitively reassigned to the position because he is qualified for the job and has a SF-50 to document that he **previously held (on a permanent basis)** a job with higher promotion potential than the job he currently holds.

- ✓ A **non-competitive eligible on the rolls of the Department** -- in a pay or non-pay status -- may also apply for jobs limited to Department of State Employees Only.
- ✓ A **Reinstatement eligible** is allowed to reenter the Federal competitive service workforce without competition in certain circumstances. The candidate may be reinstated at **or** below the grade level he/she held on a **permanent** basis prior to separating from the Federal service. The position to which the individual is reinstated **cannot**, however, have promotion potential greater than that of a position previously held on a permanent basis. Reinstatement must occur, generally, within three years unless the individual acquired career tenure or is a preference eligible veteran. (*A SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action is required to document proof of eligibility.*)

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**Example:** The Bureau of Administration (A) wants to hire a former Federal employee who was previously at Commerce on a career-conditional appointment at the GS-201-7 grade level. The employee's position at Commerce had promotional potential to the GS-12 grade level. The employee resigned August 26, 2000. Effective August 21, 2003, the A Bureau wants to reinstate the individual to a GS-343-7 Program Analyst position that has promotion potential to the GS-12 grade level. Can the individual be reinstated to this position? Yes, the job in the A Bureau has no promotion potential greater than the job the individual previously held on a permanent basis; i.e. GS-12. The individual has a SF-50 to document her eligibility; she qualifies; and will be reinstated prior to the expiration of her reinstatement eligibility, which is August 25, 2003 under this scenario.

### *CTAP Eligibles*

**Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP).** Department employees who may be separated because of a reduction-in-force (RIF) receive special selection priority for Department jobs under our **Career Transition Assistance Plan**. A non-competitive eligible may not be selected over a well-qualified Department employee who is eligible for consideration under the CTAP. (**5 CFR 330, Subpart F**).

To receive this special selection priority consideration the employee must:

- Apply for a job at or below the grade level of his/her current position and the job cannot have greater promotion potential than the job from which the employee is to be separated; and
- Be determined "well-qualified," for the position; i.e., ranked at the satisfactory or above level.

### *ICTAP Eligibles*

**Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP).** Prior to making a selection from **outside** of the Department's workforce, we **must** also give displaced Federal employees who are eligible for special selection priority under the ICTAP an opportunity to apply for the job. An ICTAP candidate who applies for the job and is determined to be "well-qualified" for the position must be selected.

A selecting official may select an eligible and qualified individual with non-competitive eligibility outside of the vacancy announcement process; however when the individual is not currently on the rolls of the Department the CTAP and ICTAP rules described above apply.

A non-competitive eligible may not be selected over a well-qualified candidate who applies under the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP)

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rules described above. **(5 CFR 330 Subpart G).**

### *Selection*

Once the Department has met any applicable CTAP and ICTAP requirements, non-competitive candidates who are eligible and meet the qualifications for a job may be hired.

Eligible Non-competitive candidates applying under **Merit Promotion and Internal Placement Procedures** who meet the qualifications for the job are referred on a separate Non-competitive Certificate of Eligibles.

### *Interviews*

When a **Certificate of Eligibles** is issued, selecting officials must conduct a *thorough* review of all candidates' application material. Interviews are conducted in accordance with the **Merit Promotion and Internal Placement** procedures described in the *Roadmap* at *Appendix C* and at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/roadmaps.html>.

### *Reference Checks*

Reference checks are also an integral part of the selection process and should be completed on **all** candidates under serious consideration for the job. Employers, former supervisors and colleagues can provide information on the candidate's qualifications, character, and general fitness for employment, work habits, and dependability. The information obtained completes the profile of the candidate and is critical to hiring the best person for the job.

### *Tentative Offers*

Once the selecting official makes a selection, he/she must work with the bureau Executive Office in getting the employee on board. Prior to extending a *tentative offer* of employment and the *final confirmation* thereof, the selecting official may consider the options and issues discussed below.

### *Temporary Provisional Appointments*

If a security clearance is required, an option the selecting official may want to consider is whether a **temporary provisional appointment** is appropriate.

In making this determination, the selecting official must determine whether (1) there is a sufficient amount of appropriate and **unclassified** work that can be performed *temporarily* without a security clearance; and (2) the work can be performed in an area where classified information is **not** stored, processed or discussed.

When the two requirements above can be met, the Executive Office can then determine the candidate's interest in accepting a *temporary provisional appointment*. The provisional employee and supervisor *must* sign a **statement of understanding** of the conditions of employment including the fact that the candidate's employment **will not** continue should a security clearance be denied. Once the candidate is granted a security clearance he/she is converted to the permanent appointment.

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### *Superior Qualifications*

Selecting officials, in consultation with their Executive Office, should also determine whether there is a need to set a new appointee's salary above the step one of the grade. In considering this option, several factors must be considered such as whether the agency has a special need for the candidate's services or he/she is uniquely qualified for the job in comparison with other candidates; and is forfeiting income. Superior Qualifications Appointments must be approved by the Director of HR/CSP prior to the effective date of the appointment and the candidate entering on duty. (See *Roadmap, Superior Qualifications Appointments and 3 FAM 2280.*)

### *Recruitment Bonus*

Consideration should also be given to whether there is a need to seek approval for a **recruitment bonus** for an individual in lieu of or in addition to setting the individual's salary above the minimum rate of the grade. A recruitment bonus **may not** be paid to a current Federal employee. For guidance (See *3 FAM 3180, Recruitment and Relocation Bonuses and Retention Allowances.*)

### *Travel and Relocation Costs*

Should there be a decision to pay travel and relocation costs, the prospective employee must sign a continued service agreement, DS Form 5052. The agreement should be forwarded along with the tentative offer and must be signed before the employee enters on duty and commences travel. By signing this agreement, the individual agrees to remain in the service of the U. S. Government for 12 months following the date he/she reports for duty. (See *3 FAM 3190, Pre-Employment Interview and Relocation Expenses for New Appointees.*)

### *Final Offers*

Once the appropriate actions on the selectee's appointment have been completed, the bureau with delegated HRM authority or the Office of Civil Service Personnel Management's Staffing Division (HR/CSP/S) takes the appropriate action to finalize the job offer and bring the employee on board.

### *Rights and Benefits*

The rights and benefits of an individual appointed under a non-competitive appointment vary and are based on the authority under which the individual is hired and the type of appointment he/she receives; i.e., permanent versus temporary.

### *References*

5 CFR 213, Excepted Service  
5 CFR 315, Career and Career-conditional Employment  
5 CFR 330, Recruitment, Selection and Placement (General)  
3 FAM 2900, Career Transition Assistance for Surplus and Displaced Employees

### *More Information*

Consult bureau Executive Office  
Contact HR/CSP Staffing Division Specialist

### Sampling of *Non-competitive* Appointment Authorities

*Non-competitive appointing authorities may be used in a variety of situations; i.e., to meet temporary or permanent needs. Some of the non-competitive appointment authorities frequently utilized by the Department of State are briefly discussed below.*

- **Eligible Family Members:** The Department has a wealth of family members eligible for non-competitive appointment to the competitive Civil Service (CS). Under **5 CFR 315.608** certain eligible family members (EFMs) may be appointed non-competitively to the competitive CS once they return to the United States. EFMs may be appointed on a temporary or permanent basis to *any* Federal occupation and grade level for which *qualified*. To be eligible, an EFM must have completed 52 weeks of service in an appropriated fund position(s) performed under a local hire appointment(s) overseas. Work must be performed during the time the family member was accompanying a sponsor officially assigned to an overseas area; and the EFM **must** have received a *fully successful or better (or equivalent) performance appraisal*. The **Family Liaison Office (HR/FLO)** is your best resource for filling a position via this authority. A more detailed fact sheet may be found at: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/employment/eoe.html>.
- The **Student Career Experience Program (SCEP)**, previously known as the Cooperative Education Program (CO-OP), was developed to train students for future Federal employment. Students may be appointed under SCEP if they are pursuing a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (GED); Vocational/Technical certificate; Associate Degree; Baccalaureate degree; Graduate Degree, or Professional degree. While completing their education, students are given an “excepted” service appointment. Students may work full-time or part-time schedules at any time during the year. There is no limitation on the number of hours worked as long as the student’s work schedule does not interfere with the student’s academic schedule. (**5 CFR 213.3202 (b)**)  
  
SCEP participants who meet all program requirements may be *non-competitively* converted to term, career, or career-conditional appointments in the competitive service at any time within 120 days after satisfactorily completing the requirements. Students hired under this program with another agency may also be converted to a career-conditional appointment in the Department within the 120-day conversion period. Additional information on SCEP may be found at <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/ree/student/coop.html>.
- The **Presidential Management Intern Program (PMI)** was established to attract outstanding individuals who have an interest in, and commitment to a career in the analysis and management of public policies and programs. Students who will complete a graduate degree (master’s or doctoral-level degree) from an accredited college or university during the academic year are eligible to be nominated by their schools if they meet particular criteria. Nominees are evaluated by OPM and finalists are referred to Federal agencies for selection. Interns are placed on an excepted service appointment. Upon completion of the two-year internship, PMIs are eligible for



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conversion to career or career-conditional appointment. For further information on the PMI program see the **Roadmap**, Presidential Management Intern (PMI) Program: [http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/pdf/pmi\\_program.pdf](http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/pdf/pmi_program.pdf). (5 CFR 213.3102 (ii))

The **Office of Recruitment (HR/REE/REC)** is the appropriate resource for filling positions through the above-stated programs. For further information visit: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/ree/student/studentprograms.html>.

- The **Federal Career Intern Program (Career Entry Program)** is a two-year internship for positions in administrative and professional fields at grades GS-5, 7, and GS-9. Initial appointment is on an “excepted” service appointment. Interns are not guaranteed Federal employment upon expiration of the internship. The expectation, however, is that interns who meet all qualification and program requirements will be converted to a permanent position in the competitive civil service. The Staffing Division of HR/CSP manages the Career Entry Program: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/toc.html>. (5 CFR 213.3202 (o))
- **Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA)** (previously called a Veterans Readjustment Appointment) permits non-competitive appointment of *qualified covered veterans* up to the grade 11 level. Initial appointment is in the excepted service. Individuals may be non-competitively converted to career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service after 2 years of successful employment. Offices should contact their bureau Executive Office to discuss VRA appointments. See the HR/CSP website: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/csp/vra.pdf> for more information. (38 U.S.C. 4212)
- **Disabled Veterans (30% or more)** Veterans with a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more may be given a temporary or term appointment and may then be non-competitively converted to permanent employment at any time provided their appointment was for more than 60 days. *Your Bureau Executive Office should be contacted for specific requirements for appointing under this authority.* (5 CFR 315.707)
- **People who are mentally retarded, severely physically handicapped, or have psychiatric disabilities** may receive non-competitive appointments if they have been certified by state vocational rehabilitation agencies or counselors as likely to succeed in the position. They are initially appointed in the excepted service under one of the following authorities, **5 CFR 213.3102 (t), (u) or (gg)**. Upon completion of a specified period of satisfactory service under any of these authorities, an employee may qualify for non-competitive conversion to a career or career-conditional appointment in the competitive service.
- **Peace Corps Volunteer:** The Department may appoint a former Peace Corps Volunteer non-competitively to a career or career conditional appointment in the competitive Civil Service (for other than temporary employment). The individual must be certified by the Director of Action as having served satisfactorily as a volunteer or volunteer leader under the Peace Corps Act. Generally, volunteers must be appointed

## APPENDIX G

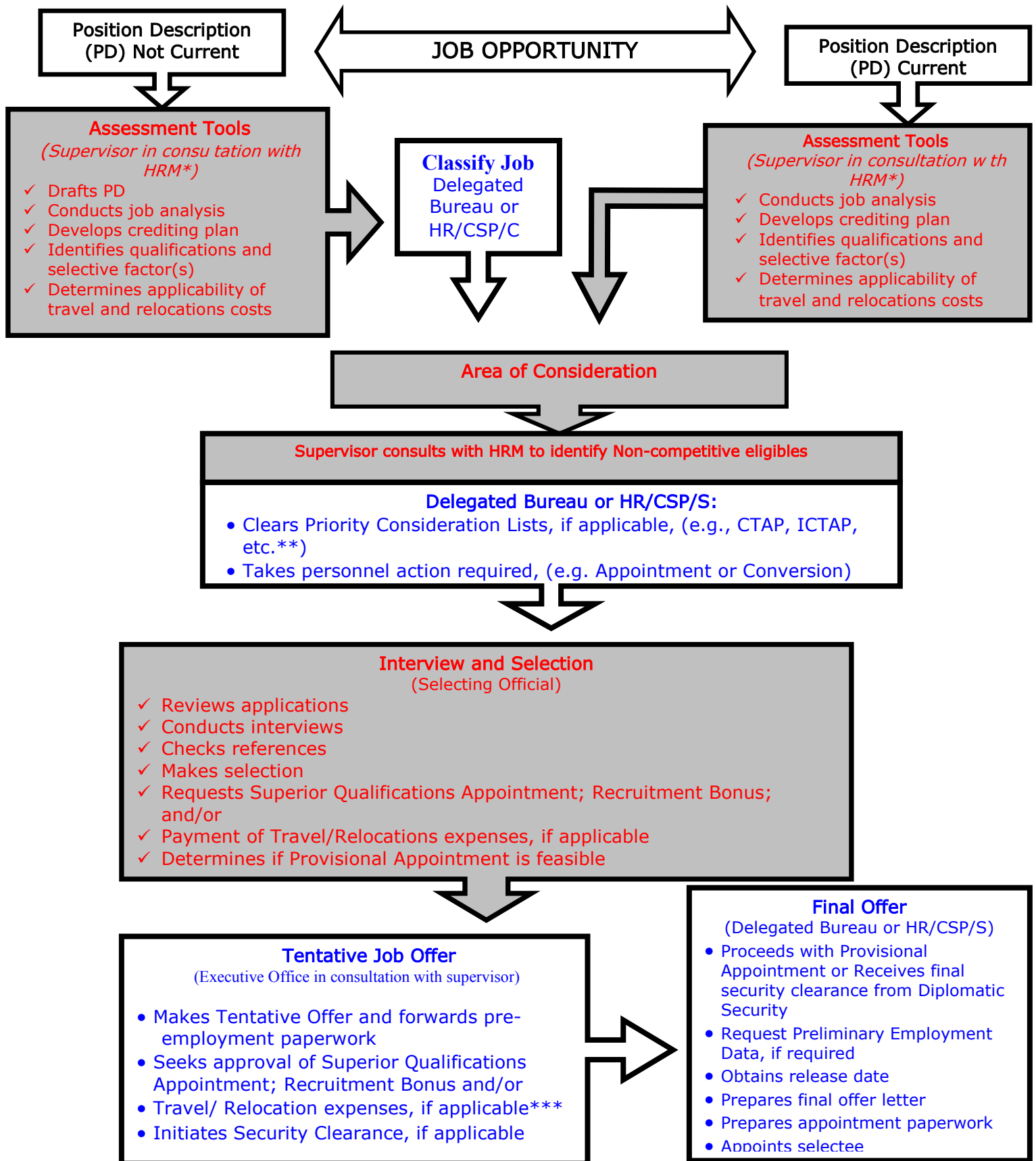
within 1 year after completing the qualifying service. **(5 CFR 315.605)**

- **Present and former Peace Corps personnel:** The Department may appoint non-competitively for other than a temporary appointment an individual who has completed no less than 36 months of continuous service without a break in service of 3 days or more under section 7 (a) of the Peace Corps Act (22 U.S.C. 2506); whom the Director of the Peace Corps certifies as having satisfactorily served under such an appointment; and who meets the requirements of the OPM qualification standards. The Act pertains to the appointment of Peace Corps staff (not volunteers). **(5 CFR 315.607)**



# SNAPSHOT - HIRING A NON-COMPETITIVE ELIGIBLE Appendix G

## United States Department of State



**Red/Check Mark** = Supervisor **Blue/Dot** = Human Resource Staff. \* HRM = Human Resource Management.

\*\*Career Transition Assistance Plan (CTAP) /Interagency Career Transition Assistance Candidates Plan (ICTAP)

**Note: All of the processes may not be applicable in certain situations. Consult with appropriate Human Resource Staff. \*\*\* Coordinate with Bureau of Human Resources, Career Development and Assignment (HR/CDA)**



## APPENDIX H -- EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

### Administrative and Management Positions

*The following table shows the amounts of education and/or experience required to qualify for Administration and Management positions only. Information extracted verbatim from Section IV-A (pp.13-17) of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Operating Manual for Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions. For further information on the occupations covered under this and other standards (e.g., clerical, professional, technical), consult the OPM Handbook at <http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/index.htm>.*

GRADE	EDUCATION	EXPERIENCE	
		GENERAL	SPECIALIZED
GS-5	4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree	3 years, 1 year of which was equivalent to at least GS-4	None
GS-7	1 full year of graduate level education or superior academic achievement	None	1 year equivalent to at least GS-5
GS-9	master's or equivalent graduate degree or 2 full years of progressively higher level graduate education leading to such a degree or LL.B. or J.D., if related	None	1 year equivalent to at least GS-7
GS-11	Ph.D. or equivalent doctoral degree or 3 full years of progressively higher level graduate education leading to such a degree or LL.M., if related	None	1 year equivalent to at least GS-9
GS-12 and above	None	None	1 year equivalent to at least next lower grade level
Equivalent combinations of education and experience are qualifying for all grade levels for which both education and experience are acceptable. Consult the OPM Handbook, as indicated above.			



## RECRUITMENT TIPS CHECKLIST

Managers and supervisors often comment that they are not getting the *best-qualified* candidates to apply for their jobs. There is one guarantee that can be made. That is – managers and supervisors who are not aware of the various human capital hiring flexibilities, labor market trends and best practices for recruitment, **will continue** to get the same kind of candidates!

There have been many innovations in the area of recruitment over the last several years *and* the Department of State has the resources to take full advantage of these. The recruitment tips checklist below provides supervisors and managers with some ideas and suggestions as to how they can best identify top-notch candidates for their jobs in a timely manner.

- ☐ Have a workforce plan:
  - What positions do you anticipate filling in the next few years?
  - How can you use different programs, such as student programs, to anticipate meeting these needs?
  - What are the current trends of the labor market?
  - What diversity concerns must be addressed?
- ☐ Know what you're looking for:
  - What skills/competencies are needed for the particular job?
  - Who is your audience?
  - Must the candidate have previous State Department or Federal experience or can a candidate without Federal experience fill the job?
- ☐ Know your hiring options:
  - What hiring authorities are available for filling this job?
  - What alternative programs could be used to fill this job (i.e., Career Entry Program, Student Career Experience Program (SCEP); i.e., CO-OP Program, etc.)?
  - Can the position be filled at the entry grade level versus the journeyman grade level, e.g., a trainee versus a seasoned candidate?
  - Have Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP)/Interagency Career Transition Assistance Program (ICTAP) requirements been "cleared?"
- ☐ Know your recruitment options:
  - Given the above considerations, what is the best way to reach your targeted audience – newspaper ads, job posting on several employment websites, e-mail to recruitment listserv, etc?
  - How can the Bureau of Human Resources, Recruitment Evaluation and Examination, Recruitment (HR/REE/REC) support your recruitment efforts?
  - How can other offices in HR help?
- ☐ Keep an open mind, make a plan and move forward!



Bureau of Human Resources



United States Department of State

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## **ROADMAP - CONDUCTING A STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

### *Background*

The most critical phase in the process of selecting an employee is the job interview. While interviews are not required, they are strongly recommended. Interviews add an additional dimension to the selection process and are a way to assess candidates' oral and interpersonal skills, and whether they can think on their feet.

In a recent study, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) examined selection interviews in the Federal Government and concluded that Federal managers rely heavily on interviews when making a selection decision. There are two types of interviews (structured and unstructured). Research shows that unstructured interviews do not predict job performance as well as structured interviews, and are vulnerable to bias and complaints.

This **Roadmap** was developed to assist selecting officials with preparing and conducting interviews to ensure that the best individual is selected for the job.

### *Definitions*

A **structured interview** is a set of specific, job-relevant and probing questions that tap into critical aspects of the job. The questions are prepared in advance and are based upon an analysis of the job and the qualifications desired in successful candidates. An **unstructured interview** is a spontaneous conversation, not a specific set of questions asked in a predetermined order with established criteria for evaluating responses. A **competency** is an observable, measurable pattern of behaviors and other characteristics.

### *Characteristics*

The table below provides key characteristics of unstructured and structured interviews:

Unstructured	Structured
The factors evaluated by the interview are implicit, and vary across candidates.	The factors evaluated are explicit, based on job analysis, and are the same for each candidate.
Questions are not necessarily job-related.	Questions are job-related.
Questions vary from interview to interview for the same job.	The same questions are asked of all candidates for the same job.
There is no system or guide for evaluating interview results.	There is a pre-developed system for evaluating interview results.
Interviewers may be untrained.	Interviewers have been trained.
<b>Source: MSPB</b>	

### *Benefits of Structured Interview*

Structured interviews provide important practical benefits. These include:

- Increased validity of selection process
- Higher quality of information obtained
- Better compliance to legal guidelines (fairness and objectivity)
- Easier comparison of candidates
- Professionalism
- Reduced stress in interview process
- Maximized use of time and expense

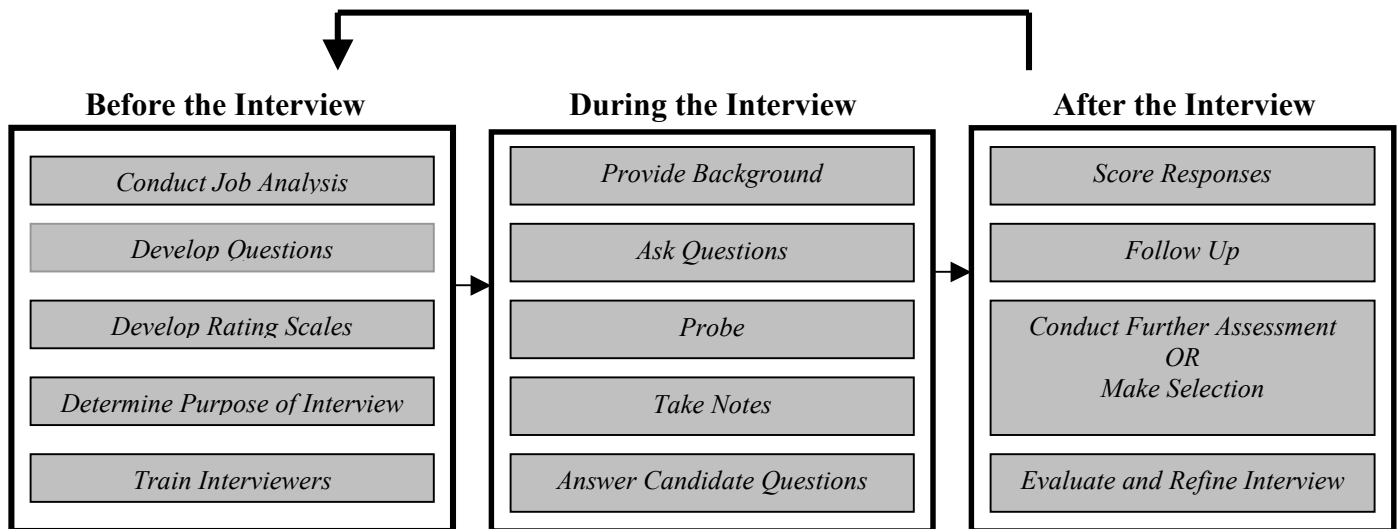
### *Pitfalls of Unstructured Interviews*

Unstructured interviews are risky, even when well-intended. The absence of structure leaves the interviewer open to rely on first impressions or to read too much into the interviewee's behavior. Consequently, the lack of structure can lead to perceptions and possibly the reality of disparate and unfair treatment. Other pitfalls include: the inability to record or evaluate, may be too time consuming, or allows the candidate too much control.

### *How Structured Interviews Work*

The structured interview process is designed to obtain responses from applicants that demonstrate that they have the technical and professional competencies important for successful job performance. Important job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities are identified, and structured interview questions are then written to address these areas. The responses to the questions can then be evaluated and scored using a specifically designed rating scale with behavioral examples.

# Structured Interview Process Model



## *Keys to a Successful Structured Interview*

Careful planning is essential to the success of a structured interview. Below is a list of tips for conducting a structured interview.

- Prepare in advance and maintain consistency for each interview
- Maintain security of interview materials
- Open and close the interview appropriately
- Base questions on job analysis and the crediting/rating plan developed for the job
- Ask each candidate the same questions
- Use detailed rating scales
- Train interviewers
- Use interview panels so that more than one person conducts the interviews
- Take good notes
- Assess candidate responses objectively
- Avoid inappropriate questions related to:
 

Gender	Religion
Marital Status	Age
Race	Political Affiliation
National Origin	Sexual Orientation
- Ask effective questions and probes. For assistance, work with HR/CSP/CD to develop job-related structured interview questions and probes addressing technical competencies; and/or utilize a

pre-developed list of structured interview questions and probes that will address the professional competencies needed for all occupations. They include:

- Interpersonal Skills
- Self-Management
- Reasoning
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving
- Oral Communication

### *Who participates?*

Much of the success of a structured interview depends upon the skill of the people involved in conducting the interview. For the purpose of this type of interview, generally, participants will include:

- Panel advisor - serves as a consultant and briefs the interviewers on the structured interview process and ensures consistency throughout the interviewing.
- Panel interviewers (a manager and other professionals in the occupational series) - ask questions, probe for more information, and evaluate applicants.
- Lead interviewer - schedules interviews and calculates evaluation ratings.

It is important to note that the people participating in the structured interview process can perform dual roles. For example, the panel advisor can participate in the interview and serve as lead interviewer. Structured interviews can be successfully accomplished with a minimum of two participants.

### *Evaluating Candidates*

Interviewers must record their individual ratings for each competency on the **Individual Evaluation Form** (see attached sample) after studying the definition and evaluation criteria. Raters must decide what level of performance was represented by the applicant's answer (from 1 = Low to 5 = Outstanding). The lead interviewer combines individual ratings into an overall group rating on each competency for comparison and discussion with panel members. This process continues until consensus has been reached; i.e. all ratings differ from each other by not more than one point.

### *Final Recommendation*

The panel will make their selection(s) or make a recommendation to a higher-level management official for final selection/approval. The interview panel will return their selection(s) to the panel advisor with all interview materials. The materials will serve as documentation for



the selection and should provide support for any further action on an individual's application.

### ***References***

The Department of State Career Entry program ***Structured Interview Guide*** (available upon request)

The Merit System Protection Board – ***The Federal Selection Interview: Unrealized Potential***

[www.mspb.gov/studies/interview.htm#pgfld-1013975](http://www.mspb.gov/studies/interview.htm#pgfld-1013975)

### ***More Information***

Contact the HR/CSP Career Development Division

**(Sample)**  
**Individual Evaluation Form**

Candidate to be assessed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

**POSITION MANAGEMENT AND CLASSIFICATION**

**Definition:** Applies established government standards and position classification policies to determine the appropriate position pay plan, title, series, and grade. Plan and implements interventions to address organizational problems.

**Lead Question:** Describe a situation in which you gave expert advice in the area of position management and classification that demonstrated your expertise to others.

**Probes:** What did you do? What was the outcome? What was the range of impact of the result?

Describe specific behaviors observed/described: (Use back of sheet, if required)

1- Low	2	3-Average	4	5-Outstanding
Is knowledgeable about the subject matter, procedures, requirements, regulations and policies related to area of responsibility. Provides expert advice to staff, higher-level managers, peers, administrative staff of other organizational units, internal and external customers of a localized function, and local stakeholder groups. <i>Impact is limited to the immediate work unit or a localized function.</i>	Is knowledgeable about the subject matter, procedures, requirements, regulations and policies related to area of responsibility. Provides expert advice to staff, higher-level managers, peers, program and administrative staff of other organizational units, internal customers, a limited population of external customers, and local stakeholder groups. <i>Impact is limited to a local operation, program segment or limited population of agency/corporate customers.</i>	Is knowledgeable about the subject matter, procedures, requirements, regulations and policies related to areas of responsibility. Provides expert advice to supervisors and staff, higher-level management, peers, internal and external customers and stakeholders; <i>impact is on a wide range of agency/corporate activities, work of other agencies/corporations, or the public.</i>	Is knowledgeable about the subject matter, procedures, requirements, regulations and policies related to areas of responsibility. Provides expert advice to staff, high-level executives within the agency/corporation, peers, multiple internal and external customers and stakeholders; <i>impact is agencywide/corporatewide and may include other agencies/corporations or the public.</i>	Is knowledgeable about the subject matter, procedures, requirements, regulations and policies related to areas of responsibility. Provides expert advice to staff, top mgmt., peers, multiple internal and external customers and stakeholders in other agencies/corporations or countries about the resource, political, and organizational implications and impact of technical issues in the areas of responsibility. <i>Impact is agencywide/corporatewide, Gov't wide, national or international.</i>
Final Evaluation:		Printed Name:		Signature:



Bureau of Human Resources



United States Department of State

# CSP Office of Civil Service Personnel Management

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## ROADMAP – SUPERIOR QUALIFICATIONS APPOINTMENTS

### Definitions

**Superior Qualifications Appointment** – An appointment made at a rate above the minimum rate of the appropriate grade based on the individual's superior qualifications *or* a special need of the agency for the individual's services.

**Superior Qualifications** – The individual brings unusually high, unique *or* superior qualifications, particularly suited to the position in comparison with other qualified individuals. In addition, the individual would be losing salary and/or benefits if employed at the first step of the grade.

**Special Need** – A documented need of the Department for a specific set of skills and/or expertise and recruitment has met with limited success. An individual who is singularly suited to a unique Departmental function; one who has special though not necessarily superior qualifications that meets the need of a position or a documented area of chronic labor shortage.

**Existing Pay** – Income a candidate would earn in his/her *current* position. In addition to salary, existing pay may include bonuses, consulting pay, fringe benefits, other outside income, *and/or* overtime worked on a **regular** basis.

**Bona fide offer** – A *current* written offer of employment that identifies the job title, salary or salary range, location, and a suggested reporting date.

### Why use this Authority?

Superior Qualifications Appointments enable Federal agencies to compete more effectively with non-Federal employers in obtaining high-quality candidates for employment.

### Coverage

With the exception of Senior Executive Service (SES) positions, superior qualification appointments can be made to any position covered by Chapter 51 of title 5.

### Determining Eligibility

The superior qualification authority **is not** intended *solely* to match candidates' existing pay. Individuals must:

- ♦ Be entering Federal civilian employment for the *first* time or returning to Federal employment after a break in service of 90 days or more. For exceptions, see 5 CFR 531.203(b)(2); *and*

## Forfeited Income – What to Consider

- ◆ Have unusually high qualifications for the particular position; *and*
- ◆ Be forfeiting income if employed at the first step of the grade; *or*
- ◆ Have a unique combination of education, training, and experience that meets a special need of the Department.

One of the factors that must be considered in determining whether there is a basis for a superior qualifications appointment is whether a candidate is forfeiting income. Several factors are considered in making this determination:

### ◆ Existing/Actual Compensation:

- Consider compensation that will be lost by accepting Federal employment.
- Do not consider income unaffected by Federal employment.
- A candidate who is leaving his/her current employment (retiring or the company is going out of business) *or* who is unemployed ***is not*** forfeiting actual income.
- Bonuses must be shown to be recurring, ***not*** a one-time payment.
- The value of fringe benefits is generally only considered when there is a significant difference between the candidate's current benefits (or lack thereof) and the Federal benefits package.
- When projecting income from consulting pay or self-employment income, the candidate's pattern of income over a period of time will be considered, rather than annualizing a single consulting fee.

### ◆ Average Salary for Occupation:

- When a candidate does not have existing income or has recently worked for less-than-market pay (e.g., a charitable organization) consideration may be given to the average salary for similar work in the location where the candidate will be employed.
- Salary information may be obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)), state or local government sources, professional organizations, employment services, or Internet salary surveys such as those found on [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com).
- The source of the salary information must be submitted along with the appropriate documentation.

### ◆ Reasonable Expectation of Employment:

If a candidate has no current income, determine the candidate's prospect for obtaining employment in the duty location. Factors to consider include:

- Demand for the candidate's skills in the local market;
- Overall employment/unemployment rates in the local area; *and/or*
- Industry-wide trends.

## Approval of Requests

- ◆ All requests for superior qualification appointments ***must be approved prior*** to the candidate entering on duty and becoming a Federal employee.

### Submitting Requests

- .. Managers and supervisors **cannot** make a firm salary commitment to the candidate. However, they do have responsibility for obtaining the information used to construct the justification memorandum.
- ◆ Bureaus with delegated personnel authority must forward all requests for superior qualifications appointments to HR/CSP for approval, unless an exception is approved in writing by M/DGHR.
- ◆ The Director General and Director of Human Resources or designee approves superior qualifications appointments. Requests shall be forwarded through the HR/CSP/S Staffing Division. HR/CSP will review the justification and documentation for completeness and compliance with legal and regulatory requirements and forward the request to the authorized approving official for a decision.
- ◆ The requesting official must forward the written justification with supporting documentation to the bureau's executive director or other bureau official for review and concurrence.
- ◆ The Executive Office submits the request to the HR/CSP Staffing HR/CSP/S **20 workdays** prior to the anticipated reporting date following the procedures at 3 FAM 2289.

### Personnel Actions

- ◆ Process appointment action using regular "hiring" nature of action codes.
- ◆ Remarks section on the SF-50, Part F: input remark code *P04* – Superior qualifications appointment made under 5 CFR. 531.203(b).
- ◆ Pay Rate Determinant on the SF-50, Part B, item 29: should be either a 5 (entitled to special and superior qualifications rates) *or* 7 (only receiving superior qualifications rate; not entitled to special rate).
- ◆ When processing **subsequent personnel actions** for employees appointed based on superior qualifications the pay rate determinant is changed to "6" for those entitled to *special* salary rate "0" or another appropriate code for those not receiving a special rate.

### References

3 FAM 2280; 5 CFR 531.203; 5 U.S.C. 5333(a) and HR/CSP  
[Customer Service Timeframes](#)

### More Information

Contact your Executive Office or your servicing Human Resources Specialist in the Staffing Division, Office of Civil Service Personnel Management (HR/CSP/S).